

AFTER THE BATTLE



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NUMBER 83

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Front Cover: On the 75th Anniversary of the end of
the First World War, Australia buried one of her
fallen countrymen exhumed from France to
become Australia's Unknown Soldier. (David
Green & After the Battle)

Centre Pages: The U-534 is brought to the surface
after 48 years submerged off the coast of
Denmark where she was sunk in May 1945.
(Joachim Rode, Nordfoto)

Back Cover: The long steps of an oleander-lined
path lead from the town, past the cemetery to
Kapi's field where the male population of
Kalavryta was taken and shot by German troops
on December 13, 1943. (John Cleave)

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FUNERAL SERVICE OF THE UNKNOWN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER NOVEMBER 11, 1993

Eulogy delivered by the Prime Minister of Australia
The Honourable P. J. Keating, MP

We do not know this Australian's name and we never will. We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, nor precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances — whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was.

Yet he has always been among those whom we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western Front. One of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War. One of the 324,000 Australians who served overseas in that war and one of the 60,000 Australians who died on foreign soil. One of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century.

He is all of them. And he is one of us.

This Australia and the Australia he knew are like foreign countries. The tide of events since he died has been so dramatic, so vast and all-consuming, a world has been created beyond the reach of his imagination.

He may have been one of those who believed the Great War would be an adventure too grand to miss. He may have felt that he would never live down the shame of not going. But the chances are that he went for no other reason than that he believed it was the duty he owed his country and his King.

Because the Great War was a mad, brutal, awful struggle, distinguished more often than not by military and political incompetence; because the waste of human life was so terrible that some said victory was scarcely discernible from defeat; and because the war which was supposed to end all wars in fact sowed the seeds of a second even more terrible war — we might think that this Unknown Soldier died in vain.

But in honouring our war dead, as we always have and as we do today, we declare that this is not true. For, out of war came a lesson which transcended the horror and tragedy and the inexcusable folly. It was a lesson about ordinary people — and the lesson was that they were not ordinary. On all sides they were the heroes of that war: not the generals and the politicians but the soldiers and sailors and nurses — those who taught us to endure hardship, to show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves, to stick together.

The Unknown Australian Soldier whom we are interring today was one of those who, by his deeds, proved that real nobility and grandeur belong, not to empires and nations, but to the people on whom they, in the last resort, always depend.

That is surely at the heart of the Anzac story, the Australian legend which emerged from the war. It is a legend, not of sweeping military victories, so much as triumphs against the odds, of courage and ingenuity in adversity. It is a legend of free and independent spirits whose discipline derived less from military formalities and customs than from the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity. It is a democratic tradition, the tradition in which Australians have gone to war ever since.

This Unknown Australian is not interred here to glorify war over peace; or to assert a soldier's character above a civilian's; or one race or nation or one religion above another; or men above women; or the war in which he fought and died above any other war; or one generation above any that has been or will come later.

The Unknown Soldier honours the memory of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia. His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war and what we have gained.

We have lost more than 100,000 lives, and with them all their love of this country and all their hope and energy.

We have gained a legend: a story of bravery and sacrifice and, with it, a deeper faith in ourselves and our democracy, and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

It is not too much to hope, therefore, that this Unknown Australian Soldier might continue to serve his country — he might enshrine a nation's love of peace and remind us that, in the sacrifice of the men and women whose names are recorded here, there is faith enough for all of us.



THE AUSTRALIAN UNKNOWN SOLDIER



By Ross J. Bastiaan, OAM

The Commonwealth of Australia came into existence on January 1, 1901 and she entered the war against Germany and Austria-Hungary in August 1914. By 1918, over 60,000 Australians had lost their lives with a further 165,000 being wounded — a heavy sacrifice when set against over 300,000 Australians who served in the First World War. *Top:* More than 23,000 Australians were recorded as missing and on July 22, 1938, the Australian National Memorial was unveiled on Hill 104 at Villers-Bretonneux — scene of one of Australia's victorious battles — by King George VI in the presence of Queen

Elizabeth and Albert Lebrun, President of France. The memorial, designed by Edward Lutyens in the form of an open quadrangle, lay at the rear of Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, and its walls were inscribed with the names of 11,000 Australians missing on the Western Front. *Above:* Fifty-five years after the memorial was dedicated, and 75 years after the end of the First World War, the remains of an Australian unknown soldier are borne with due ceremony across the same greensward for interment in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. (PNA & Robert Allison)

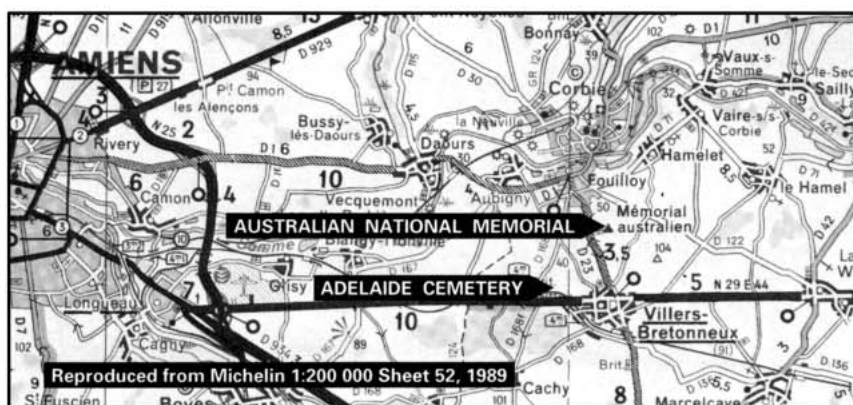


Left: The Unknown Warrior buried in Westminster Abbey, London, on November 11, 1920 (see *After the Battle* No. 6) was intended to be a representative of all those who gave their lives for 'Home and Empire'. However, the desire to create a separate tomb of an unknown Australian soldier has been evident in Australia ever since, especially at various significant moments like the end of the Second World War in which a further 40,000 Australians lost their lives, of whom over 12,000 have no known grave. It was the approach of the 75th anniversary of the Armistice of 1918 — the last major anniversary at which veterans of that conflict could be present — that spurred the Australian War Memorial to decide to repatriate the remains of an unknown Australian soldier for burial in the Hall of Memory in Canberra to provide Australians with a powerful symbol of their nation's personal sacrifice in war. As it was on the Somme and in Flanders that Australia suffered its greatest number of casualties in war, the Memorial decided that an unknown soldier from that region would best symbolise the country's loss. Because the official handover of the remains by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to the Australians was to take place at the National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, it was decided to select an unknown from the Adelaide Cemetery (above right) which lay just a mile away across the fields. It was an original WWI cemetery established in June 1918 and had been used by the 2nd Australian and 3rd Australian Divisions. This picture shows French children tending the graves in Row H. (AWM)

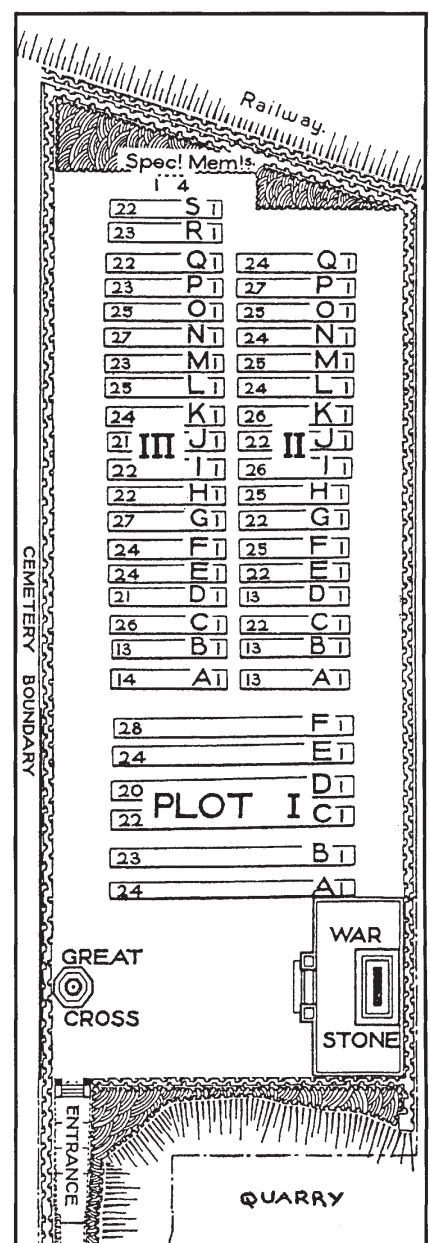
On November 11, 1993, Australia ceremonially entombed the remains of an unknown Australian soldier in Canberra. This soldier had died 75 years previously on the Western Front and henceforth will be the embodiment of the great suffering and the sacrifices made by 102,000 Australian men and women who have served and died in war.

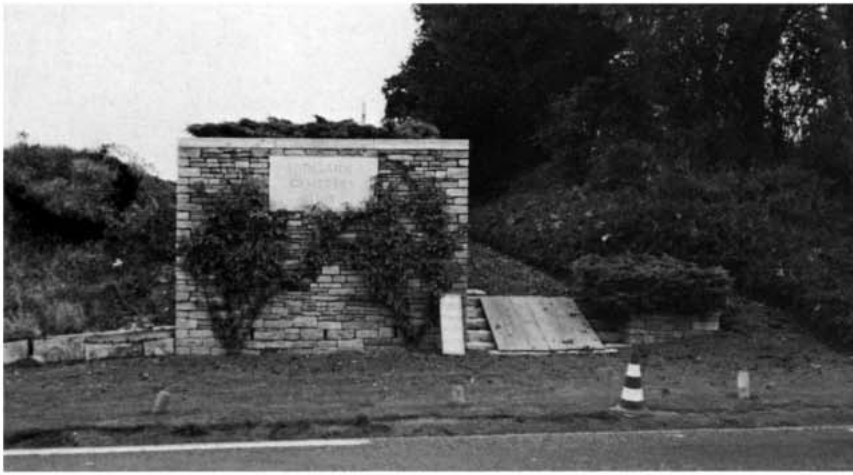
The Unknown Warrior in Westminster

Abbey, London, has been the symbol of British and Empire service personnel who have died at war ever since the body of an unknown soldier was exhumed from the battlefield in 1920. Since then, there has been a longing for Australia to have one of its own unknown soldiers entombed at home and the 75th anniversary of the Armistice in November 1993 offered an opportune occasion.



After the Armistice, a further 800 dead were brought in from graves north, west and south of Villers, bringing the total buried to 956. Of these, 523 were Australians of whom 117 were unknown by name, although confirmed as Australian by virtue of badges or insignia found on the bodies. The plan (right) shows the cemetery as finally established by the then-Imperial War Graves Commission. In August 1993, representatives of the Memorial travelled to France and finally selected Grave 13 in Row M of Plot III to become Australia's Unknown Soldier.





On Tuesday, November 2, preparations were made to open the grave. The cemetery (above) was cordoned off and screens erected. Skeletal remains were found and photographed (although the prints and negatives were later destroyed). Right: A temporary marker was placed on the backfilled grave recording the fact that 'The remains of an unknown Australian soldier lay in this grave for 75 years. On 2nd November 1993 they were exhumed and will rest in the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra'. (Robert Allison)



The negotiations for the retrieval of the body took place between the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) and the Australian War Memorial (AWM) with the co-operation of the Australian government. The negotiations were mediated by the AWM Director, Brendon Kelson, and the Deputy Director, Dr Michael McKernan, and resulted in permission to remove the remains of one soldier from French soil. The soldier so chosen was killed in Europe in the Great War of 1914–1918 as it was in France and Belgium that Australia suffered 45 per cent of all its war dead.

The grave of the returning unknown soldier was selected with care and purpose. One of the graves in Adelaide Cemetery, which is just outside Villers-Bretonneux in northern France, was chosen for several reasons. Fifty-four per cent of the graves in Adelaide Cemetery were Australian and 117 of these were unknown. The chance of identifying the remains was minimal as 90 per cent of the graves in Adelaide Cemetery

were brought from small graveyards and isolated positions on the periphery of the town. Meticulous records kept by the CWGC, with notes detailing clothing and equipment buried on the body 75 years ago, ensured that these remains were, without doubt, Australian. The soil in which the graves were situated was well drained and this enhanced preservation.

Villers-Bretonneux was the scene of bitter fighting in 1918 and the Australian Army made a significant contribution to the defence and recapture of the town with support from British forces. As a result of this action, Australia and Villers-Bretonneux have close links that flourish today. In 1938, Australia erected its National Memorial at this French village to those of its countrymen who served in the Great War. Many of those soldiers killed in the street fighting in Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day (April 25) are known to lie in Adelaide Cemetery. Anzac Day has been held every year since 1916 as Australia's Day of Remembrance for its war dead.

The grave of the Unknown Soldier was selected in Adelaide Cemetery and the exhumation of the remains was carried out on November 2, 1993. Mike Johnson, Director of the CWGC in France, supervised the procedures at 8 a.m. on a chilly morning. A police cordon was established around the cemetery and 20 graves were shielded by a three-metre cloth screen. The intact skeletal remains of the selected body were then exhumed from the grave and placed in a copper casket which was then sealed. This casket was placed in an inner coffin, constructed from Australian timber which, in turn, was encased in an outer coffin of Tasmanian blackwood. The exhumation of the body was witnessed by the Australian Defense Attaché in France, and by Dr Richard Reid and Robert Allison on behalf of the Australian War Memorial. At approximately 10 a.m., the coffin was transported four kilometres in a specially-prepared vehicle with a French military escort to the Australian National Memorial which lies on the other side of Villers-Bretonneux.



Left: Having sealed the remains within a double coffin, it was loaded aboard a specially-prepared French military vehicle under the watchful eye of Mike Johnson, Director of the CWGC in France. (This picture recalls a similar scene of French soldiers



handling the casket of the American Unknown Soldier reproduced on page 39 of issue 26.) Right: The 100-kilogramme coffin of Tasmanian blackwood begins its journey to Australia. (Robert Allison)



At the Australian National Memorial, a French Army bearer party, led by a French piper, carried the coffin up through the lawned avenue of Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery towards the Memorial. The coffin was flanked by six ceremonial pallbearers. These were the Military and Defence Attachés who represented Canada, Britain, India, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. The remains were thus delivered to the catafalque. His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent (President of the CWGC) accepted the remains on behalf of the CWGC from the French. A dignified but simple ceremony was conducted in which speeches were made by the Duke of Kent, the Prefect of the Somme Département, and the Australian Ambassador to France, Ambassador Alan Brown.

His Royal Highness then officially delivered the coffin to the guardianship of the Australian Ambassador and this concluded the ceremonies at noon. A new bearer party

The first leg was just 2½ miles to the cemetery at Villers-Bretonneux. At this stage, the coffin was bare as it had yet to be formally handed over to the Australian authorities. Here, the French military pallbearers, led by a piper, slow march through the cemetery towards the Australian Memorial. (Robert Allison)

from the Australian Defence Force took charge of the coffin. The bearers selected all had relatives who served in France in the Great War. The commander of the bearer party placed the Australian flag, bayonet and slouch hat on the coffin which was then borne to a room at the base of the Memorial Tower.

Three hours later, the coffin was placed in an unmarked French ambulance and conveyed under gendarmerie escort to Pont-d'Achelles Military Cemetery at Nieppe. There it was transferred to a Belgian military ambulance and driven to the Cloth Hall at Ypres. The coffin was laid at the Menin Gate at 7.30 p.m. where a short ceremony was held to commemorate the rôle that Australia played in the defence of Belgium 75 years

before. The coffin was returned to the Cloth Hall at 8 p.m. and there it lay in state overnight with a military guard. The following day, the coffin was brought back to Nieppe and transferred again, this time to a French military ambulance, and returned to the catafalque at the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.

On November 5, the Australian bearer party took the Unknown Soldier to Cambrai Military Airbase and, after a short ceremony, the coffin was flown by helicopter to Charles de Gaulle Airport, just north of Paris. A Qantas 747 (QF6) had been specially renamed the *Spirit of Remembrance* for the 10,000-mile homeward journey for this long-absent soldier to his native shores and was standing by for the historic flight.



Left: The Australian and French flags fly at half mast as the coffin, now covered with the Australian national flag, lies on the catafalque before being borne inside the 100-foot tower of the Memorial by the Australian bearer party. This excellent observation post overlooking the First War Somme battlefield



was occupied by the French Army in 1940 and, as a result, suffered from German shelling. Some of the damage is still visible today. (Robert Allison) Right: The remains were officially transferred from the French to the Australians by HRH The Duke of Kent (centre), CWGC President. (CWGC)



With an Australian Army Guard of Honour, the Unknown Soldier remained in the room at the base of the tower until early afternoon when it was driven north to the Franco-Belgian border at le Seau, just west of Armentieres. At Pont-d'Achelles Military Cemetery, right on the frontier, the coffin was trans-

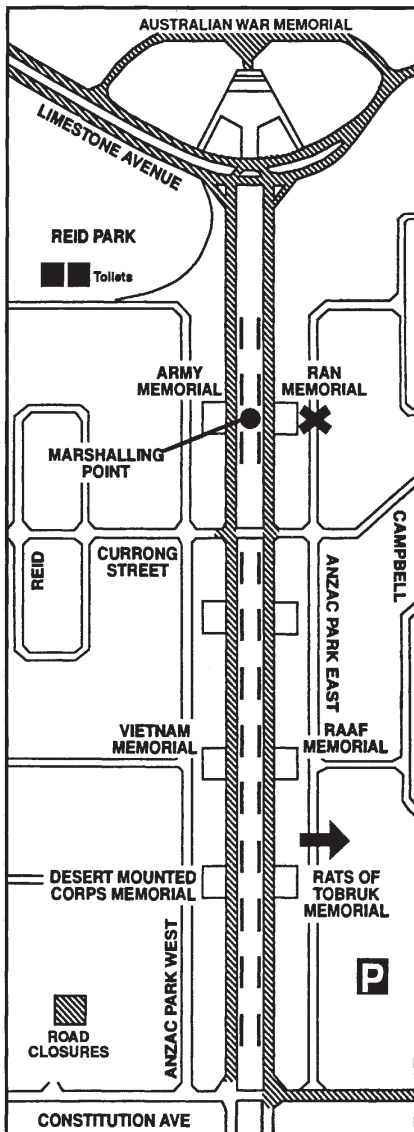
ferred to the Belgian military, who continued the journey via 'Plugstreet' Road and the N365 to Ypres. After a ceremony at the Menin Gate to acknowledge the rôle Australia played in the fighting in Belgium, the coffin lay in state in the historic Cloth Hall until Wednesday morning. (CWGC & Robert Allison)





The aircraft arrived in Sydney at 6.40 a.m. on November 7, where the coffin was transferred to a Royal Australian Air Force C-130 for the flight to Canberra. After the arrival in the Australian capital, it was taken to the

Before being flown from Paris, the coffin had been returned to the Villers-Bretonneux memorial where it remained until Friday, November 5. The coffin finally reached its destination — Canberra — on Sunday, November 7. Upon arrival, it was taken to the Old Parliament House to lie in state to give Australians the opportunity to pay their last respects. (CT)



Old Parliament House where the Unknown Soldier was to lie in state within King's Hall. During the next four days, members of the Australian public were able to pay their respects.



A tomb had been prepared within the domed Hall of Memory of the Australian War Memorial. The four slender pillars in the niche in the background, one each of stone, timber, metal and glass, represent the four elements: earth, air, fire and water, which feature in the surrounding mosaics. They are designed to lead the visitor to reflect on the meaning of the tomb and what it represents. (CT)



On the morning of November 11, Canberra was bathed in warm sunshine and the scene was set for the last stage of this memorable journey. During a three-hour vigil early that morning, school children had read a thousand names from the War Memorial's Roll of Honour, representing just one per cent of the 102,000 Australians killed in war.

Just after 9.30 a.m., the bearer party, flanked by 13 First World War veterans, carried the coffin outside from King's Hall and deposited it on a 1915 gun carriage. The cortège's route was along King George Terrace, across Lake Burley Griffin via Commonwealth Avenue bridge, and then up Anzac Avenue to the Australian War Memorial.



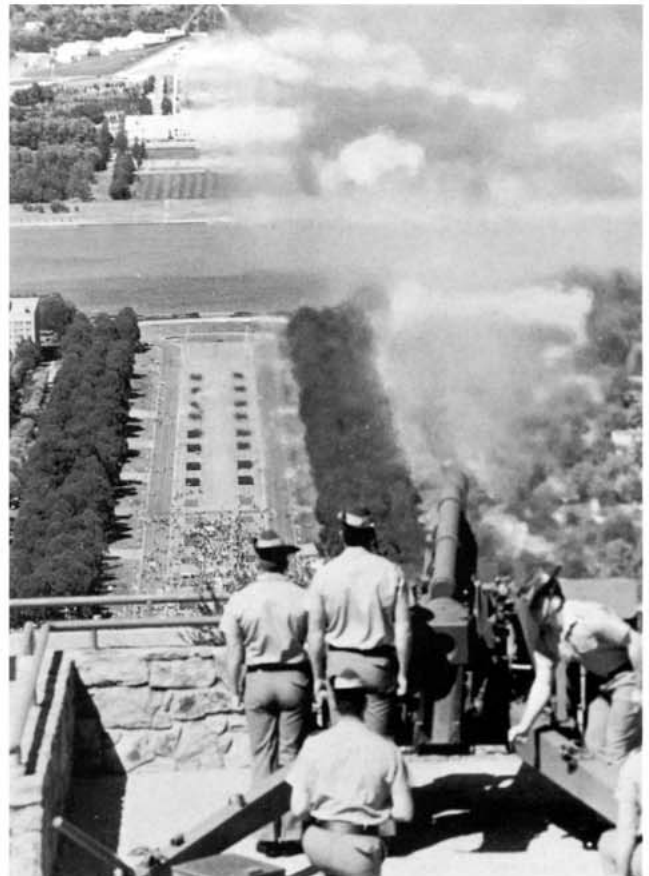
Left: An honoured place in the ceremony on Thursday, November 11, was accorded those veterans of the First World War who had travelled to Canberra from all over the country. The standard-bearers of the various unit organisations fell in behind the official party, making by far the largest element in the parade. (David Green)
Right: Mounted soldiers lead the procession onto the Australian War Memorial's parade ground which lies in front of the Memorial at the foot of the 2,700-foot Mount Ainslie. (Ross Bastiaan)

A crowd of 25,000 was present and millions more watched on television or listened on national radio. On this sunny summer's morning, a lone unknown Australian was honoured by the finest military ceremony Australia has ever staged. At 9.50 a.m., the bells of St John's Anglican Church sounded to mark the beginning of the formal funeral procession and church bells pealed from

Byron Bay to Broome, echoing around the country. Each minute, for 19 minutes, mourning guns fired a salute, the same salute as that accorded a field-marshal. In the warm still air, those congregated at the Memorial began to hear the strains of the distant band as the procession passed up Anzac Avenue playing *The Vanished Army*, the *Dead March from Saul* and *Flowers of the Forest*.



Left: The procession approaches the Australian War Memorial as **(right)** troops from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, fire



one of the 19 rounds of a field-marshal's salute from a 105mm howitzer emplaced on Mount Ainslie. (CT)



Above: The beflagged coffin rests on the Stone of Remembrance as, right, Prime Minister Paul Keating delivers the Eulogy 'to one of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century'. (David Green & CT)

The chief mourner was the Governor General, Bill Hayden, and chief pall bearer Prime Minister Paul Keating. The official pall bearers were the Leader of the Opposition, John Hewson, the Vice-Chief of the Defence Force, Lieutenant-General John Baker, the Chief of the Naval Staff represented by Rear-Admiral Rod Taylor, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General John Grey, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Ian Gration, the National President of the Returned and Services League of Australia, Major-General 'Digger' James, and the Vice-Chairman of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Air Chief Marshal Sir Joseph Gilbert. All told, there were 32 official mourners including the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, State Premiers and the mayors of Villers-Bretonneux and Ypres.

The route was lined by thousands, including 500 unit organisations from around the country proudly carrying their banners. Overhead, the flags of 80 nations fluttered in the light breeze, one for each country or territory in which lie Australia's war dead. Mounted horsemen led the procession wearing the uniforms of the Boer War and the First World War. Following the horsemen came a group at the slow march wearing uniforms of the First World War. Second in this group, and standing out starkly, was a woman dressed in an old-fashioned nurse's uniform, symbolic of the suffering shared by women in war. Three hundred soldiers, sailors and airmen came next, representing the 63,000 members of Australia's armed forces.

At the War Memorial, a large crowd was assembled on the parade ground and around the Stone of Remembrance on which the coffin was placed for the service. The Chairman of the Council of the Memorial, Dame Beryl Beaurepaire, accepted the remains. The 23rd Psalm was sung. The Prime Minister read the eulogy and a prayer was said by Naval Principal Chaplain, Garath Clayton. The catafalque party retired and the coffin was carried into the Memorial past the Pool of Reflection and into the Hall of Memory.

The pallbearers — two men each from the Navy, Army and Air Force — bear the Unknown Soldier to his last resting place. (CT)





Bob Comb, 93 years old, and the only living First World War veteran in Canberra, was accorded the honour of casting a handful of Pozieres soil onto the coffin as it lay in the tomb.

At 10.48 a.m., the Principal Army Chaplain, Bruce Horton, read the Prayer of Committal and the coffin was lowered into the tomb by the same bearer party that had accompanied it all the way from France.

Three final volleys were fired by the firing party before the prayer of dedication was read. The Governor-General placed on the casket a sprig of golden wattle, Australia's national flower. Ninety-three-year-old veteran Robert Comb sprinkled soil from Pozieres over the casket in the shape of the cross symbolising the fact that Australia had suffered its greatest number of casualties at this French village. The President of the Returned and Services League read the ode; this was followed by the Last Post and a two-minute silence. The funeral party then returned to the parade ground and the National Anthem *Advance Australia Fair* was sung followed by a prayer for Australia by the Royal Australian Air Force's Principal Chaplain, Monseigneur John White.

The dignitaries and the general public attended in their thousands to pay a silent tribute to all those who served the nation and each person was invited to lay a single flower as a gesture of respect. After three days, the tomb was sealed with a huge slab of inscribed Turkish marble. The sloping marble glaciis around the tomb bears the words 'HE SYMBOLIZES ALL AUSTRALIANS WHO HAVE DIED IN WAR'.

It is fitting that Australia, which has fought in many campaigns overseas, should have now recovered one of its own unknown soldiers to rest in peace in his homeland to represent those who could not return. The dignity and tranquillity of the Hall of Memory provides a perfect setting befitting the presence of this fallen warrior to enshrine the Spirit of the Nation. The repossession of these remains confers new substance and spirit to the very heart of the Memorial, and a human focus to which all Australians can pay tribute both now and in future generations.



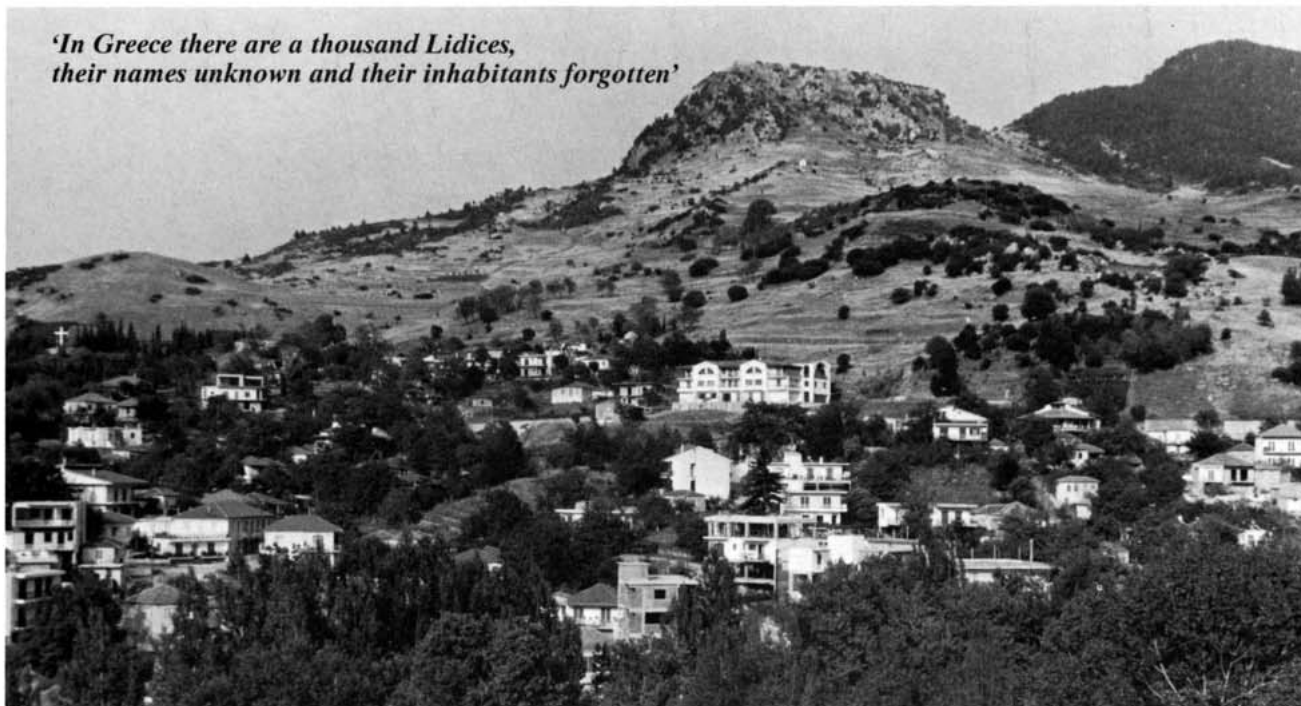
**DEATHS RECORDED ON THE ROLL OF HONOUR
AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL, CANBERRA
OF ALL THOSE KILLED IN OVERSEAS CONFLICTS**

Sudan	1885	9
China	1900-01	6
South Africa	1899-1902	588
First World War	1914-18	61,720
Second World War	1939-45	39,366
Korean War	1950-53	339
Malayan Emergency	1950-60	35
Indonesian Confrontation	1963-66	15
Vietnam War	1962-72	520
Gulf War	1990-91	-
Peacekeeping Operations	1947-	3
		102,601



On November 18, the tomb was sealed with a 1½-ton marble slab.

*'In Greece there are a thousand Lidices,
their names unknown and their inhabitants forgotten'*



THE MASSACRE AT KALAVRYTA

PROLOGUE

On December 13, 1993, following a memorial service in the cathedral, a long procession left the centre of Kalavryta, a small town high in the northern Peloponnese. Led by the mayor, Takis Nikolaou, and Ambrossios, Metropolitan Archbishop of Kalavryta and Aigialia, the column moved at solemn pace out of the town, up the long steps of an oleander-lined path, past the cemetery, to the foot of a hill crowned by a giant cross. At about 12.30 p.m. it halted on a stone-paved square flanked by tall, grey, concrete slabs. After a brief blessing, the names carved on the slabs were read out to the assembled crowd, and as the last of these rang out a runner entered the square with a flaming torch, which had been carried in relay from ancient Olympia, some 40 miles to the south-west, and lit with it an eternal flame set beside the square. Then, with simple ceremony, Greek officials, visiting dignitaries and townspeople laid wreath upon wreath below the slabs, and the crowd stood bareheaded in the cold sunshine to observe a minute of silence.

The occasion was the 50th anniversary of 'The Sacrifice' — the shooting by German troops of the male population of Kalavryta and the firing of the town. The day's ceremonies in Kalavryta (literally 'good springs') were the culmination of a series of commemorative occasions there and across Greece in remembrance of the largest, in

terms of both loss of life and destruction, of some 1,700 similar incidents which occurred during the occupation. The site of the impressive memorial bearing the names of some 1,300 victims from Kalavryta and nearby villages of German wrath, is the amphitheatre overlooking the town where, on the chill winter's afternoon half a century ago, machine guns opened up on the men and boys who had been herded there earlier in the day.

THE KALAVRYTA MASSACRE

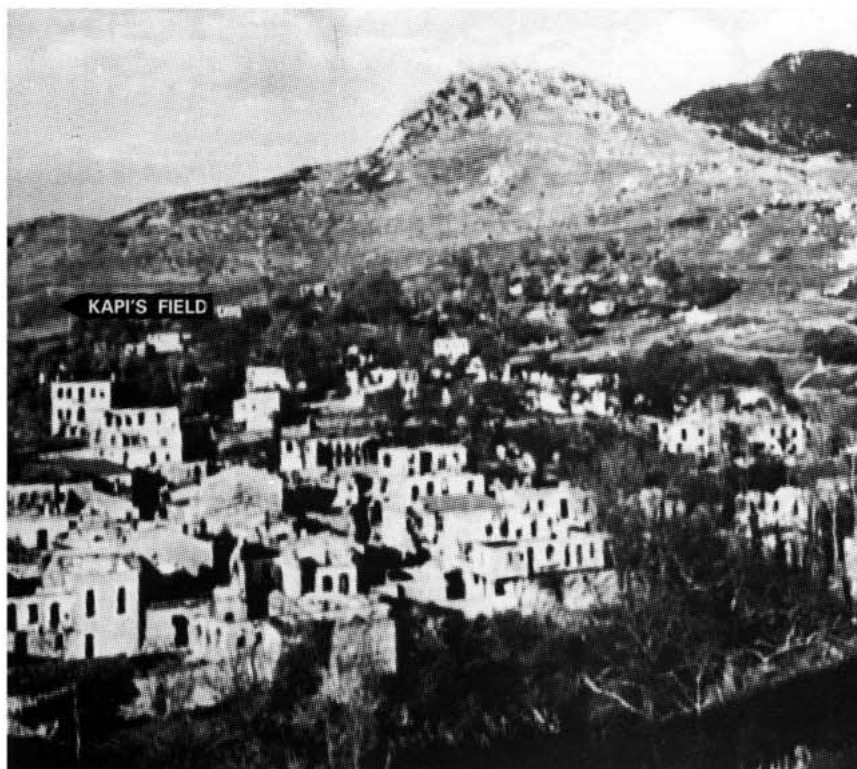
The components of the Kalavryta incident are fairly clear. Early in 1942, resistance to the occupation of Greece by German and Italian forces began to organise. Several groups with royalist, nationalist and left-wing political leanings emerged, but dominating this movement was EAM (Ethniko Ape-

By John Cleave

leftherotiko Metepo), the National Liberation Front directed by the Greek Communist Party, KKE. The military wing of EAM was the people's liberation army, ELAS (Elinikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos). Initially, activities were small-scale, uncoordinated, and largely ineffective. However, during 1943, sabotage and attacks on the various elements of the occupying forces were stepped up in a loosely-concerted effort that covered large areas of Greece. In July, reflecting growing concern at the attacks, Hitler's Directive No. 48 ordered the planning of a series of large-scale operations (Grossunternehmen) against the guerrillas and the first of these were launched in October.

Kalavryta in the northern Peloponnese — the large peninsula in southern Greece — has become the symbol of all the 1,700 villages which suffered destruction and loss of life in reprisals carried out by German forces in Greece during the Second World War. The bitter, no-holds-barred war between the Greek resistance and the occupation forces, in a country whose topography was ideal for guerrilla warfare, came to a head in December 1943 with the razing of the village and the deaths of the entire male population. Right: Kalavryta as it appeared before the war and top the comparison taken by John Cleave today.





Photographed from the same spot; the gutted remains of the village in the winter of 1943-44. The massacre took place in Kapi's field which is now marked by a giant white cross seen in the present-day view opposite. The large building which now stands on the hillside in the centre of that picture is an old people's home constructed after the war with German funds given as a gesture of atonement.

The first partisan attacks in the Peloponnese were launched by ELAS on May 15, 1943. In August and again in September, German army units had visited Kalavryta, the largest town in the area of guerrilla operations in the northern Peloponnese, and warned the populace against providing aid to the partisans. They gave force to their argument by shooting several men in nearby villages, and hanging, before the town's main hotel, Hotel Chelmos, an 18-year-old found with a weapon. Following these warnings, the town elders pleaded with the partisans not to involve the town, but the ELAS leadership decided, on the contrary, to step up their attacks. They set up their headquarters in Vysoka, only three kilometres from Kalavryta, and sabotaged the roads to Patras, Mazeika and Diakopto.

With the surrender of the Italian Army on September 8/9, 1943, thousands of its weapons fell into partisan hands giving them new opportunity to recruit and operate in strength. A report by the 'Ic', the staff intelligence officer at HQ of LXVIII. Armeekorps, dated November 27, 1943, is revealing. It stated that, in the Peloponnese where German troop strength was low, EAM and ELAS had 'come to assume the power of the state in all ways . . . The bands control the road traffic and the collection and distribution of the olive harvest . . . They hold judicial sessions at which not only political opponents but also the usual delinquents are sentenced.' The report continued that, although the northern Peloponnese had been virtually free of 'bandits' until October 1943, thereafter there were five to six thousand operating in the impassable mountain country in the hinterland of Patras and Aigion. This included two to three thousand in the Kalavryta area where they were under the command of a former lieutenant-colonel in the Greek Army, Dimitri Michos.

On October 19, a particularly large scale ambush of a German company, 5. Kompanie of Jäger-Regiment 749 based on Aigion,

took place at a rail junction at Antritsa near Kerpini, some four kilometres north of Kalavryta. Four Germans, including the company commander, died and most of the rest of the force comprising 78 soldiers, three of whom were wounded, was captured. The Germans offered to exchange the prisoners for Greeks held in custody, but rejected the partisans' insistence on 50 Greeks being



A group of partisans in the Kalavryta area in July 1942. Partisan operations increased when large numbers of weapons fell into their hands following the surrender of the Italian Army in September 1943. By the year's end, Communist-directed ELAS partisans in the Kalavryta area were estimated by the Germans to number 2-3,000.

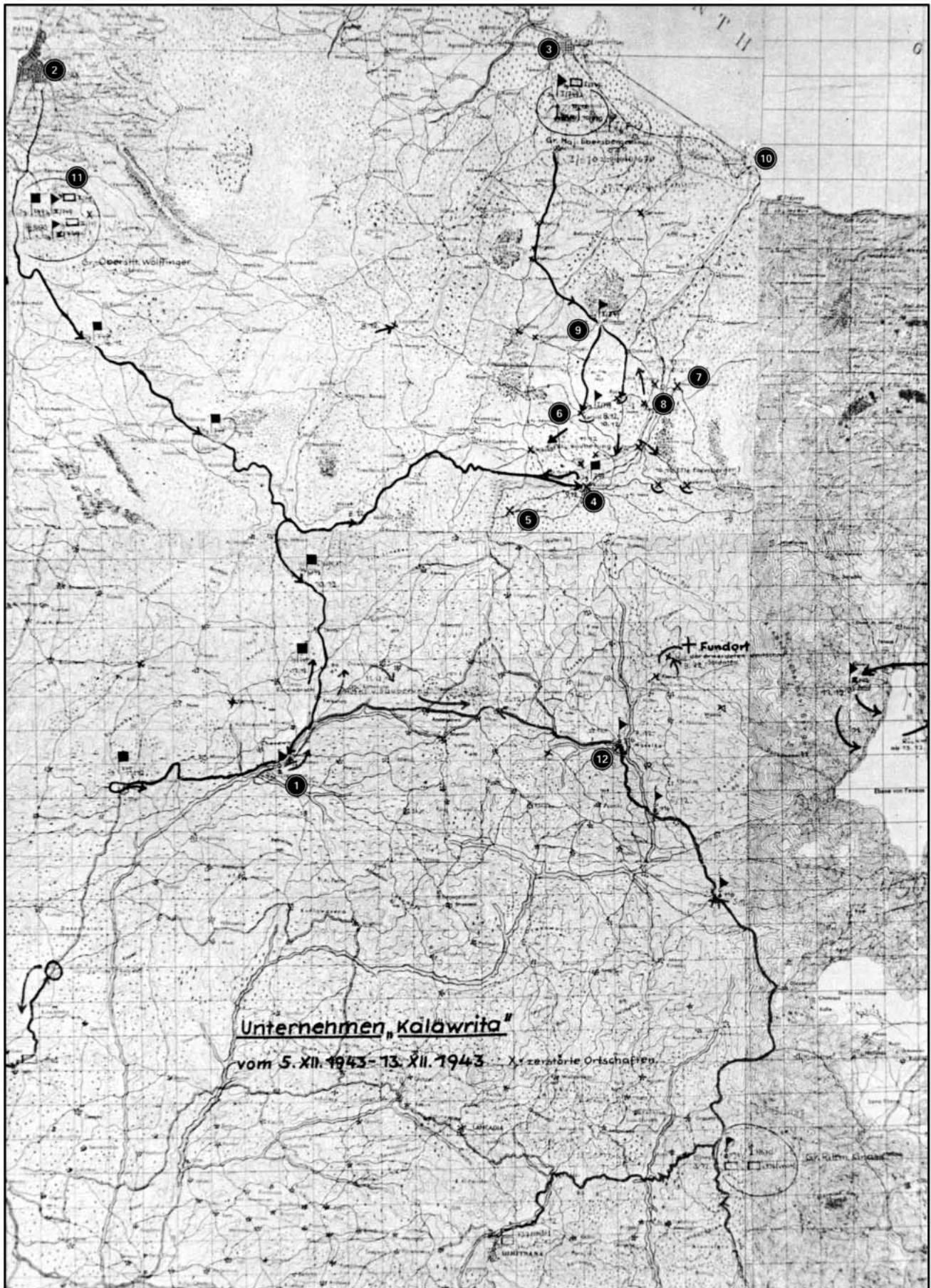
released for one German — the ratio which the Germans themselves followed in their reprisal policy.

On November 28, following an unsuccessful search for the prisoners, an instruction was issued for the LXVIII. Armeekorps to mount a retaliatory action coded *Unternehmen 'Kalavryta'* (Operation 'Kalavryta'). Less than a week later, units of 117. Jäger-Division were mobilised. The corps commander was General der Flieger Helmuth Felmy, but he was on leave at the time and the operation was ordered and launched by the commander of the division, General Karl von Le Suire, a staunch Nazi with a reputation for being anti-Greek.

Three major Kampfgruppen, each named after its commanding officer, converged on Kalavryta. Kampfgruppe [Oberstleutnant] Wölffinger started from Patras to the north-west of Kalavryta and after a relatively uneventful march was the first to enter the town. Kampfgruppe [Major] Ebersberger started from Aigion to the north. His troops carried out a series of reprisals and burned several villages en route to Kalavryta. Kampfgruppe [Rittmeister] Gnass operated from Tripoli in the south. Its troops were the first to mobilise but appear not to have reached Kalavryta.

The progress of the two-week exercise is tersely sketched in the daily reports of LXVIII. Armeekorps extracted below, and graphically shown on the operations map of the corps reproduced overleaf. (The dates are those of the report, not the events, which always occurred on the previous day.) The reports originated with the 'Ia', the operations officer at corps HQ in Salonika, and were signed by the '01', the first adjutant officer, Lieutenant Frey. A daily intelligence summary was also produced by the Ic. As this largely repeated the information of the operations report, only extracts which provide additional material have been added here, in square parentheses.

The two-company-strong Kampfgruppe Kockert, which opened operations, appears to have been an advance unit of Kampfgruppe Gnass. The III. Bataillon, 22. Jäger-Regiment, based on Corinth, was briefly introduced to block partisan movements to



German operations map for Operation 'Kalavryta', December 5-13, 1943. Kampfgruppe Gnass started from near Tripoli [1] in the south, Kampfgruppe Wölffinger from Patras [2], north-west of Kalavryta, and Kampfgruppe Ebersberger from Aigion [3],

due north. Villages destroyed are marked X. 'Fundort+' marks where the bodies of the German prisoners were recovered. [4] Kalavryta. [5] Agia Lavra. [6] Kerpín. [7] Mega Spíleon. [8] Rogi. [9] Vilínvina. [10] Diakopto. [11] Chalandritsa. [12] Mazeika.

the east. Festungs-Infanterie-Regiment [FIR] 965, based on Pirgos, was also active at this time but apparently was not considered part of Operation 'Kalavryta'.

3.12.43. Intentions for 3.12: Aufklärungs-Abteilung 116 [AA 116, from Tripolis] to begin Operation Kalavryta.

4.12.43. Operation Kalavryta: AA 116 reached Vytina; 2 reinforced Jäger-Kpn. (KG Kockert) reached Dimitsana without enemy contact.

Intentions for 4.12: Increased reconnaissance of Langadia by AA 116 and continued march towards Vytina by KG Kockert.

5.12.43. Intentions for 5.12: 117. Jäger-Division [from Aigion] to begin Operation Kalavryta. Execution of 50 hostages at ambush site at Antritsa rail junction.

6.12.43. KG Gnass' objective of Pantraki (10 km N of Vytina) reached without enemy contact. 50 hostages hanged at Antritsa station as reprisal measures.

7.12.43. (a) KG Wöllfinger (II. and III./JR 749) [2nd and 3rd Battalions, 749th Light Infantry Regiment] reached Chalandritsa (10 km SE of Patras). Enemy fled to SE after brief exchange of fire. (b) KG Gnass (AA 116 with 2. Kompanie, III./JR 737 and 1 battery of Artillerie-Regiment 670) arrived in the area 20 km S of Kalavryta. (c) In the operation, 1 reinforced company exchanged fire with 30 guerrillas near Hagionorion (7 km SSE of Chileomodeon). So far, weapons and ammunition captured.

8.12.43. KG Wöllfinger reached the area 20 km SE of Patras, KG Ebersberger reached Vilivina (15 km S of Aigion), and KG Gnass reached Mazeika. No further enemy resistance.

9.12.43. Cordon created 10 km around Kalavryta. The 78 men of 5. Kompanie/JR 749 that were overcome on 19.10 in Kalavryta, except for some who escaped, were murdered on 7.12 in the mountains east of Kalavryta.

Intentions for 9.12: Position III./JR 22 in the area 25 km SE of Kalavryta to prevent the bands escaping east.

[Ic: In reprisal for shot German soldiers, villages to be burned down and male inhabitants shot].

10.12.43. KG Wöllfinger reached Kalavryta without enemy contact. KG Gnass advancing to the west with battle-strength units in Tripotamia (8 km E of Prinofyton). One truck-borne reinforced company of Festungs-Infanterie-Regiment [FIR] 965 arrived at roadblock outside Lalas (22 km SW of Tripotamia). III./JR 22 reached Kastanea (30 km SE of Kalavryta).

[Ic: Two survivors confirm murder of 78 German soldiers was by shooting. Search for dead, without result].

11.12.43. (a) KG Wöllfinger continued towards Tripotamia without enemy contact. KG Major Ebersberger continued reprisal measures in Roji [Rogi] and Kerpini (4 km N of Kalavryta). Details lacking. (b) 1 platoon-strength scout troop of the reinforced company of FIR 965 in action 10 km S of Livri. Own losses: 10 dead, 11 wounded.

12.12.43. (a) KG Wöllfinger reached Prinofyton [Mazi] without enemy contact. (b) KGs Ebersberger and Gnass mopping up and reconnaissance in Kalavryta-Tripotamia area. No enemy contact. (c) Reprisal measures to date: 9 villages in the area NE of Kalavryta destroyed and 142 men shot. (d) Reinforced company, FIR 965 in the area 14 km S of Prinofyton. No enemy contact. (e) III./JR 22 reached Fonia (20 km SE of Kalavryta) without enemy contact.

13.12.43. Operation Kalavryta terminated except for carrying out of reprisals. KG Wöllfinger on the return march to head-

Geheim! 684

Geheime Kommandosache!

Fernschreibstelle

Fernschreibens Laufende Nr. 655/541/43

Abgeschicktes Aufgenommen

Datum: 194. Datum: 14. 12. 1943

Uhr: 1830 Uhr Uhr: 1805 Uhr

von: HMP/IR/KN/IV/IS HLDIV

durch: Vuch Vuch Ruch

Rolle:

Vermerke:

Fernschreiben

Bestimmungsort von: LXVIII. A.K. Ia

Bestimmungsort:

14.12.43 0855 An mchr.: 1.) O.Kdo.H.Gr. E Ia 541

Abgangzeit Abgangzeit 2.) 117. Jg. Div. 542

3.) 11. Lw. Felddiv. 543

KR (nur für H.Gr.)

Vormärkte für Beförderung (vom Aufgeber auszufüllen) Bestimmungsort

Tagesmeldung.

1.) Paläpennos:

a) Unternehmen "Kalawrita": Im Zuge der Sühnemaßnahmen 3 Ortschaften niedergebrannt, Kalawrita völlig zerstört, 511 männliche Einwohner erschossen. 70 Leichen der ermordeten deutschen Soldaten geborgen. Kampfgruppen auf dem Rückmarsch in ihre Standorte unter Durchführung von Sühnemaßnahmen.

b) Während des Einsatzes der verst.Kp.Fest.Inf.Rgt.965 in Pirgos 24 Verbrecher durch Banditen aus dem Gefängnis befreit.

2.) Bewegungsmeldung.

a) 11./999 nach Sprengung Flugplatz Messene nach Kalamata verlegt.

b) 2 Kpn. XII./Fest.Inf.Btl.999 in Korinth eingetroffen.

LXVIII. A.K. Ia Nr. 7518/43 geh.

11103 EINS RE HKN/IV/IS

Nicht zu übermitteln

Unterschrift des Aufgebers

Fernsprech-Anschluß des Aufgebers

'Kalavryta completely destroyed.' The terse daily report from LXVIII. Armeekorps issued early the following morning announcing the destruction of Kalavryta and the shooting of 511 (sic) men.

quarters. In a search at the site of the shooting of units of 5. Kompanie/JR 749, several corpses recovered.

14.12.43. Operation Kalavryta: In the course of reprisals 3 villages burned down, Kalavryta completely destroyed, 511 male inhabitants shot. 70 corpses of murdered Germans recovered. KGs carrying out reprisals on the return march to their stations.

15.12.43. In continuation of reprisals in the area of Kalavryta, 1 village and 2 monasteries [Mega Spileon and Agia Lavra] destroyed. Movement report: After completion of Operation Kalavryta, AA 116 arrived in Tripolis and reinforced company of FIR 965 in Pirgos. Some units still returning to their quarters.

16.12.43. Operation Kalavryta: In the course of reprisals, Mazeika [now named Klitoria] (11 km SE of Kalavryta) burned down. Operation completed. (Ic: 18 houses destroyed in Dara [Daras] (12 km SE of Mazeika) and 35 Communists arrested).

The LXVIII. Armeekorps reported at the end of December that during that month its troops had burned 28 villages and shot 918 Greeks, 839 of which, including the entire male population of Kalavryta (696), were shot as hostages. These figures clearly understate the reality, and the terse military reporting omits much, not least the killing on December 8 of 15 men including eight monks from the monastery at Mega Spileon. Their bodies were then tossed over the cliff above the historic site.

It is to the more graphic descriptions of the events in Kalavryta. The units of Kampfgruppe Wöllfinger entered the town, without resistance, on December 9. Before reaching Kalavryta, the Germans had already learned that the captured soldiers of 5. Kompanie of Jäger-Regiment 749 had been killed by the partisans as they fled the German sweeps, and the decision to destroy Kalavryta and shoot the men had already been made. But the Germans revealed nothing of these plans. They imposed a 4 p.m.-to-dawn curfew,



December 1943. Widows attending graves at the site of the massacre. Lacking the means or strength to move the bodies, the women initially buried their men where they fell, and moved the remains to the cemetery later. Without food and shelter, the harsh winter left the women and surviving children in desperate straits.

forbade all movement outside the town, and demanded the surrender of any weapons. They then set about identifying the houses of partisans, which they burned down along with the Hotel Chelmos.

They also questioned the townsmen about the missing men. The townsmen knew of the prisoners, but of the whereabouts and fate of only three. Immediately after the clash near Kerpini, the partisans had brought the 78 captives into the town where they were held overnight in the school. Next morning, they had marched the prisoners off to the south, leaving behind the three wounded, who had then been treated at the Hotel Paradeisos which was being used as a hospital. A few days later, however, a small group of partisans had arrived, demanded the wounded men, taken them some way out of town, knifed them, and thrown the bodies down a well. From there they were later recovered by the townsmen, and buried close to town.

Over the period December 10–12, the Germans were largely engaged in sweeps through villages surrounding Kalavryta, and in searching for the bodies of the missing soldiers. On the day after they entered the town, the Germans were shown the graves of the three that had been wounded and the bodies were exhumed. In the town there was uneasy quiet. Five men accused of breaking curfew were shot, and there was some looting by soldiers, but the Germans took no general action against the town, and the citizens gradually relaxed, even discounting hints from sympathetic Germans that reprisals were to take place.

But at dawn on Monday, December 13, the Kalavrytans woke to the sound of the church bells and German troops in the

streets. Everyone was signalled to go to the school, taking food for one day and a blanket each. At the school, all females and young boys were ordered into rooms on the north side of the building, and the men and youths

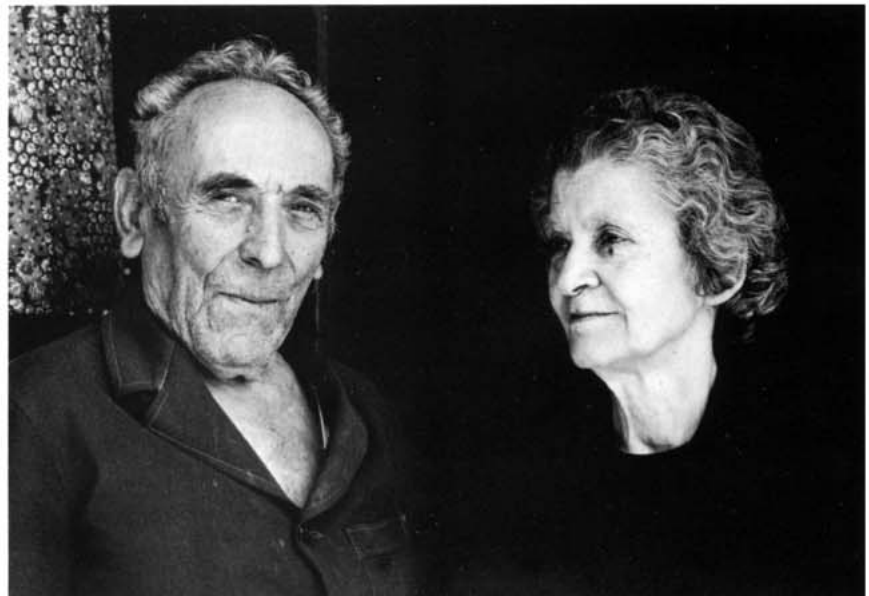
into the south rooms. Shortly after 9 a.m., the latter were marched off out of the town in three groups. Heading the last group was the local priest, Father Panagiotis Demopoulos, and a former lieutenant in the Greek Army, Panos Nikolaïdis, who had returned to Kalavryta to minister to disabled veterans.

The men were halted on a hillside overlooking the town, and held in a hollow on land belonging to a teacher, Kapi, under the watchful eye of guards from Kampfgruppe Ebersberger, manning machine guns. They were commanded by Hauptmann Egon Döhnert. For two hours, nothing beyond a head count of the men present occurred. Through a teacher of French they were told that Kalavryta would be destroyed and the population relocated, but that no harm would befall them. Then smoke began to rise all over the city as the Germans started to set fire to the buildings. About noon, the manager of the National Bank and the town treasurer were summoned and sent into town under escort. There they were made to open the vaults, which the Germans emptied. The pair returned about 1.30 p.m.

Sometime after 2 p.m., a green flare was fired from the city. The German guards moved positions. A second, red, flare went up. Döhnert gave a signal and eight machine guns opened up on the men huddled in the hollow. After about five minutes, the machine guns stopped and the Germans went round looking for signs of life, pulling bodies by arms or legs and giving a coup de grâce to any that stirred. At 2.34 p.m., the shooting finally stopped. Then, their work apparently complete, the firing party formed up and was marched back towards the burning town, singing.

There were 13 survivors from the massacre, one being Panos Nikolaïdes, who survived in spite of being hit three times. Another was Panais Sarantavgas who was unwounded.

Kalavryta itself was totally destroyed. Only eight houses out of perhaps 500 were left standing. The church was gutted, its roof finally collapsing at 10 p.m. that night, but the Bible in its glass case was virtually undamaged. The shops and remaining hotels were burned. The school also caught fire early in the afternoon (apparently from flying embers, not a deliberate act) but the women and children still being held there



Survivor. Panos Nikolaïdis, here with his wife, was a lieutenant in the Greek Army who fought with the 40th Light Infantry Regiment in Epirus in 1940–41. After the surrender, he returned to Kalavryta to take charge of disabled veterans and was caught up in the German reprisals. Although hit by three bullets, he survived, and has written up his experiences of that day.

were able to get out unharmed. However, they were barred by the Germans from going to see what had befallen their husbands and fathers and brothers, and it was not until four o'clock that they realised the full enormity of what had happened.

The Germans pulled out of Kalavryta that evening. Next day, Kampfgruppe Ebersberger put the historic monastery at Agia Lavra to the torch where, in 1821, the Greek War of Independence against the Turks had started.

And so ended Operation 'Kalavryta', the last of the series of Grossunternehmungen in the Peloponnese. Nevertheless, its ramifications were to continue long after the battle.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Although the Germans had gone, for the Greeks the agony was far from over. The winter of 1943-44 was a hard one in the high Peloponnese and even the partisans had to send part of their force home for lack of supplies. Deprived of shelter, clothes, and their menfolk, conditions for the starving women and remaining children of Kalavryta were desperate. The Red Cross, which first reached the town two days after the atrocity, tried to get food through, but the partisans continued to cut the lines of communication. It was only after long negotiations with both the partisans and the Germans, each of whom for their own reasons initially opposed its use, that limited supplies were able to get through on the rack and pinion railway which climbs steeply the 23 kilometres from Diakopto, south-east of Aigion, to Kalavryta. Meanwhile, with few tools to help them dig in the hard ground, the women laboured for two months to bury their dead, including several who had survived Kapi's field only to succumb from lack of aid.

Within days, the story of the events at Kalavryta was being widely discussed in Athens. The outside world heard later. On February 25, 1944, a *Daily Telegraph* special correspondent writing from Ankara included a somewhat distorted version in a general story under the headline 'German Savagery in Greece', and it was referred to in an article from Cairo published in the *Telegraph* three weeks later. But generally the story attracted little attention outside Greece.

When it reached the Greek authorities, the Prime Minister, Ioannis Rallis, who had taken office earlier in the year, wrote to Generalleutnant Wilhelm Speidel, Military Commander, Greece (later to become Rommel's chief-of-staff in northern France — see *After the Battle* No. 80) complaining of the savagery of the German action. He also



Above: The gutted remains of the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the centre of Kalavryta. Below: The church was rebuilt after the war, with the original pillars left standing. Although the roof collapsed, the church Bible, which was standing on the lectern, suffered only scorch marks.



The rack and pinion railway, running from Diakopto to Kalavryta through a deep gorge, was the only way help could reach the destitute survivors. At first, neither the Germans (who needed the rolling stock to bring down wood fuel and feared partisans would sabotage it) nor the partisans (who believed it would be used to move troops against them) were prepared to allow the line to be used for supplies, but finally both agreed.



Left: In 1943-44, the locomotives were wood-burning steam trains like the one shown here. **Right:** Today, the engines are diesel-powered, seen here at Zachlorou, the station for the Mega Spileon monastery. The two villages of Upper and Lower Zachlorou were destroyed on December 4 in the early stages of Operation 'Kalavryta', the male inhabitants shot, and their bodies thrown into the gorge.



Left: Burned-out houses on Kernikis Prokopiou Street. Right: Completely rebuilt, Kalavryta is now a small but bustling administrative centre and resort.

pointed out the stupidity of the destruction of Kalavryta, which, he reminded Speidel, was the scene of a Turkish massacre during the War of Independence to which the Greeks would see a parallel. Speidel, in his response, alleged the support of the partisans by the populace. He said that both Kalavryta and the monastery at Mega Spileon were taken only after resistance was overcome, a statement contradicted by LXVIII. Armeekorps reports. He undertook to try to prevent such an incident recurring, but in the next breath offered as justification the heavy loss of life among German civilians in the Anglo-US air raids on German cities. He went on to urge support for the German army in its 'fight against international communism' as epitomised by the partisans.

This letter was no apology, but on January 13, 1944, Speidel wrote to Generaloberst Alexander Löhr, chief of Heeresgruppe E, complaining that the Kalavryta incident, by uniting the nationalists and the Communists in their resentment, had undermined German efforts to foster distrust between them. In clear reference to the burning of Agia Lavra, he added that historic monuments, specifically including monasteries, and works of art should not be damaged. But there was no question that the hostage policy be changed, only that its adverse effects for the Germans be minimised by better propaganda against the Communists. And the policy continued. In May 1944, the Peloponnese was created a 'battle zone' and martial law was declared throughout. In that month alone, LXVIII. Armeekorps reported killing 1,149 Greeks, including 671 shot as hostages.

Nor did the reprisals stop partisan activity. On December 31, 1943, the German commander in Corinth observed that 'since the reprisal action [at Kalavryta] was carried out, the number of attacks and sabotage has in no way diminished'. An intelligence map for January 1944 confirms this, showing activity continuing across the Peloponnese, particularly in the south but also including ambushes and demolitions on the Corinth–Aigion–Patras road. And as the German forces weakened in 1944, so the partisans everywhere became more effective.

Today, there is intense feeling by many Kalavrytans against the partisans for involving the town, and it is fair to ask what was gained for so high a price. It can be claimed that the Greek resistance played a key rôle in the Allies' plans to deceive the Axis about the direction of the Allied thrust into Europe — Churchill defended his support by arguing that it diverted two German divisions into Greece at the time of the Sicily landings in July 1943 — and it was later to slow the withdrawal of German divisions to the Eastern Front. However, its military value was much reduced by the open conflict between ELAS and right-wing partisan groups which broke out in October, and it was fear of an invasion through Greece rather than fear of the par-

tisans that caused the build-up of 273,000 German troops at that time. To the partisans' credit, from March 1, 1943 to October 15, 1944, the peak period of resistance, German records show 2,369 Germans killed, 4,204 wounded, and 1,810 missing in occupied Greece. Sixty-five per cent of these casualties

were inflicted between June and October 1944. But the cost was enormous. Even German records show 21,255 Greeks killed and 1,700 villages destroyed. Greek sources quote much higher figures and most victims were civilian non-combatants, caught between ruthless foes.



The gaunt and gutted buildings of 1944 (above) have now been swept away . . . save for one ruin (below left) which has been retained as a symbol of the destruction. Below right: Other evidence can be detected, like this house with a balcony but no second storey.





On the site of the massacre stands a memorial on which are carved the names of 1,300 men and boys from Kalavryta and nearby villages killed by the Germans.

After the war, a fine memorial was erected on the execution site outside Kalavryta. On the ridge above the amphitheatre stands a huge cross; on the slopes below are the carefully-tended graves of those few victims who were buried where they fell; the name of each of the victims (including, in a separate panel, those of 52 boys aged from 12 to 17 years) is carved on huge concrete slabs; and each is also commemorated by a flame burning in a small chapel buried in the side of the hill. A granite sculpture that symbolises the agony stands alongside. In the town cemetery, a quarter mile below the site, grave markers with three, four or five names bear witness to the families which lost as many as three male generations in one afternoon.

Except for one symbolic ruin, the town has been rebuilt and is a bustling administrative and, increasingly, tourist centre, but within the new church, the pillars of the old have been left standing. The clock in one tower is that from the old church, its hands frozen in time at 2.34 p.m., 'the moment that time stopped in Kalavryta'. Outside, there is a memorial to 'the good Father' Demopolous.

The school where both the German prisoners and, a few days later, the men and women of Kalavryta, were held, was rebuilt in 1946 in the same form. To mark the 50th anniversary, it is being converted to a museum documenting the tragedy. And Kalavryta is a founder member of the World Union of Cities for Peace which unites cities which have become symbols of the horrors caused by war and counts Coventry, Lidice and Dresden among its number. The strong 'no more war' stance of the post-war town authorities is spelled out in many languages on the roadway up the memorial.

Panos Nikolaïdes is one of only three survivors from the killing field still alive today; he and his wife run a general store near the centre of Kalavryta. Panais Sarantavgas, having survived the Germans unscathed, was to die shortly after the liberation at the hands of his fellow countrymen in

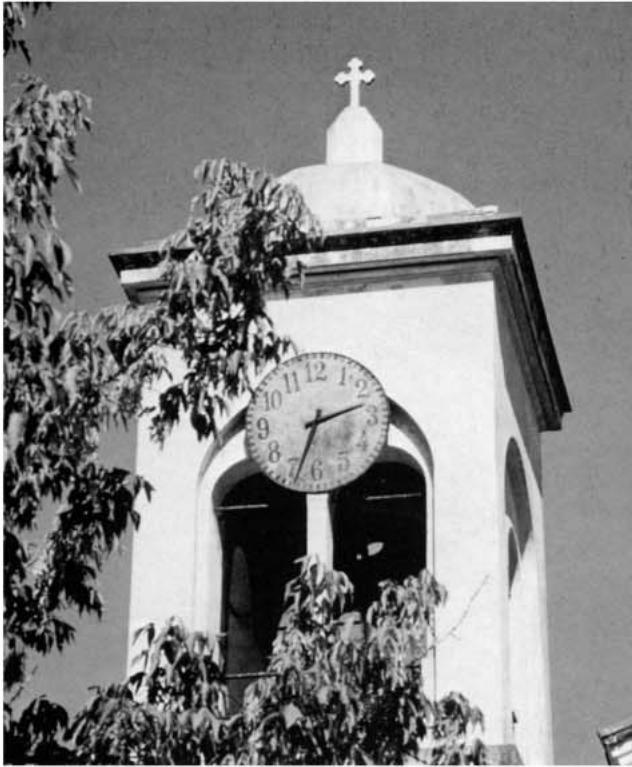
the bloody civil war which broke out less than a year after the Kalavryta incident as the Communists and nationalists struggled for control of the country. That further agony was to continue until 1949.

Since the war, many Germans have made gestures of atonement for the events of Unternehmen 'Kalavryta'. Presenting books for children at the high school in Kalavryta in 1961, Gebhard Seelos, then West German ambassador to Greece, expressed his shame and sorrow: 'Saddened, I bow my head [for the] victims of inhuman orders, with which today's Federal Republic of Germany has

nothing in common'. Scholarships in Germany for orphans of the massacre, and the gift of the old persons' home which stands above the newly-built city are further expressions of these sentiments. On December 13, 1993, as Kalavryta bowed its head in remembrance, German TV replayed a stark 45-minute documentary criticising the events of 50 years before. And amongst the dignitaries laying wreaths at the execution site that day was the German ambassador to Greece. His offering lay alongside that of the mayor of Warsaw, and those from other cities devastated during the war.



On a ridge above the site stands a giant cross, and nestled in the hillside is a chapel hung with lamps commemorating the victims.



Above: Frozen in time, the clock in one of the bell towers of the rebuilt church forever shows 2.34, the hour at which the guns fell silent in Kapi's field — 'the moment that time stopped in Kalavryta'. Right: The cover of the programme for the 46th anniversary of the Kalavryta massacre held in December 1989. Its dramatic symbolism says it all.



But there is another side. Veterans of the 117. Jäger-Division meet regularly to remember their exploits, most recently in Salzburg on September 11, 1993, and have launched furious verbal attacks at Eberhard Rondholz, the author of the documentary. And no case has been brought before any West German court charging wrongdoing during the German occupation of Greece. In the only case investigated under the German legal system of an officer who took part in Operation 'Kalavryta', the investigator at Bochum, having been presented with full details of the events, declared the operation 'legal' and 'acceptable' — a position for which support can be found in International Law — but felt it opportune to add that it had also been 'necessary under the circumstances' — a statement which caused grief in Greece and embarrassment in Germany.

The victors took another view. At Nuremberg, General Speidel and General Felmy, the LXVIII. Armeekorps commander, were tried for reprisals against civilians, and given terms of imprisonment. Felmy was also convicted of wanton destruction of property and looting. General Löhr was captured and tried in Belgrade, and hanged in 1947. General von Le Suire, commander of the 117. Jäger-Division, who had been taken prisoner on the Russian front, died in captivity in 1952. Of Major Ebersberger, who carried out the destruction of Kalavryta, there has been no trace. Hauptmann Döhnert, who led the firing party, is reputed to be living in Austria.

My interest in this story was prompted by a visit to Kalavryta with Andreas and Anna Zaimis, through whom I met many of the warm-hearted people of that attractive town. They and their son Fokion also reported to me on the 50th anniversary and helped with details of the area.

I was guided to sources and/or provided information by many people. Mrs Wichmann at the Wiener Library, London, and Keith

Sword at the University of London, launched me on my document search. Invaluable assistance was given by: John Hondros, whose book, *Occupation and Resistance: The Greek Agony, 1941-44*, Pella Publishers, N.Y., 1983, provides a detailed analysis of the resistance movement; Hagen Fleischer, who also sent me his summary of the Kalavryta incident prepared for the Report on the Military Service of Kurt Waldheim; Robert Herzstein, author of *Waldheim: The Missing Years*; and Eberhard Rondholz, who also sent me several documents including his paper (in Greek) *The Reprisals of the German Occupation Forces from the Proceedings of the 1st International Congress of Contemporary History, Athens 1989*.

My thanks are also due to Panos Polkas, former Mayor of Kalavryta who allowed me to copy photographs of the war years and gave me other materials; the late Thanos Tsaparas, publisher of *The Voice of Kalavryta* who gave me permission to copy and use the operations map for Operation 'Kalavryta' from his archives; Robin Cookson of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., the source of the other German records; Panos Nikolaidis and Stephanos Xamakiotis who shared their recollections; and Lorraine Ford in the City Secretary's Department, Coventry, who provided information on *The World Union of Cities for Peace*.

For translations I am indebted to my friends and former colleagues at the World Bank, Wolfgang Bertelsmeier, Ullrich Kiermayr and Ben King (from German), and to my wife, Laura (from Greek).

Published sources for the Greek view of the events were: D. Kaldiris and P. Nikolaidis: *The Blackest Day of the Occupation*, 1963; and a typescript by P. Nikolaidis, 1970; Dimitris Kaldiris: *The Tragedy of Kalavryta*, 1973, translated by Mary Jane McNally Crotty as *The Drama of Kalavryta*, 1989; Ilia Papasteropolou: *Tragedy at Kalavryta (13.12.1943)*, 1976; Francesca Nika: *Kala-*

vryta 1943; and Jeanne Tsatsos: *The Sword's Fierce Edge*, trans. by Jean Demos, Vanderbilt UP, 1969.

Reference was also made to: John Keegan: *The Second World War*, Hutchinson, London 1989, which is the source of the title quote by a Nuremberg prosecutor; Winston S. Churchill: *Closing the Ring*, Cassell, London 1952; Chester Wilmot: *The Struggle for Europe*, Collins, London 1952; Herbert Kubly: *Gods and Heroes*, Doubleday, New York 1969; and Mark Mazower: *Inside Hitler's Greece*, Yale UP, New Haven and London 1993, a new study which provides a useful overview of the politics of the occupation period.



In December 1993, a wreath is laid on behalf of the President of the German Republic.



THE TRAGEDY OF HMS DASHER

By John G. Hall

On March 27, 1943, at Ardrossan in Ayrshire on the west coast of Scotland, a memorial was dedicated to the 358 officers and men of the escort aircraft-carrier HMS *Dasher* who lost their lives when she blew up and sank within minutes as she passed up the Firth of Clyde between Ardrossan and the Isle of Arran on March 27, 1943.

The *Dasher* was American-built and had been converted from the merchantman *Rio de Janeiro*, loaned to Britain under the Lend-Lease Agreement. She was commissioned on July 1, 1942, but did not sail from New York to Britain until the end of August. On October 27, *Dasher* sailed with a naval force for Operation 'Torch', the invasion of North Africa, returning later to the UK, and in February 1943 arrived at Scapa Flow for operations with the Home Fleet. On Febru-

ary 15, *Dasher* sailed in convoy for Murmansk but she was forced to return to Iceland and then Dundee after sustaining heavy storm damage. Repaired at Dundee on Scotland's east coast, *Dasher* sailed westwards to the Firth of Clyde and was making for Greenock when disaster struck at 4.45 p.m. on Saturday, March 27.

Aviation fuel aboard exploded and the vessel took a violent list and almost immediately started to go down by the stern, trapping more than half the crew. Many of those who dived into the sea faced another hazard when the surrounding sea caught fire. Eventually, ships in the vicinity managed to move in and save 149 of the crew, landing them at Ardrossan and Lamlash. The Imperial Chemical Industries' ship *Lithium* rescued some 40 sailors from the sea,

La Capricieuse, a French sloop, saved 26, ML 528 another 40, both from the sea and from Carley floats or rafts, and HMS *Isle of Sark* a further 35. Several small craft went out from Ardrossan and also helped pick up survivors and bodies. A number of those rescued succumbed to their ordeal or injuries, and 13 sailors were buried in Ardrossan Cemetery. Survivors were accommodated in the local barracks and hotels, the injured in several hospitals, with the more serious suffering from burns being sent to the military hospital at Ballochmyle. Those survivors fit enough to travel went by train to Chatham and were under instruction not to disclose the circumstances of the disaster.



The 492-foot-long merchantman *Rio de Janeiro* became the foundation for the escort carrier HMS *Dasher*. In April 1941, the Sun Shipbuilding Company in the USA began converting the hull, completing the work by July 1942. *Dasher* was powered

by an 8,500 hp diesel engine giving her a speed of 16.5 knots. She could carry 19 aircraft and was armed with three 4-inch and 19 20mm weapons. Top: Joining a convoy at Boston, Massachusetts (NA); above launching a Hurricane. (FAA)

CLYDE SECRET CAN BE TOLD Crowds see carrier blow up

Express Staff Reporter

IN the full light of the afternoon of March 27, 1943, the escort carrier *Dasher* sailed up the Firth of Clyde, reared up on end after an internal explosion, poised for a few minutes

with her flight deck almost vertical, then plunged to the bottom, stern first.

Nearly 500 of her crew of 600 were lost within sight of hundreds of people in Arran.

Dasher, a converted U.S. merchantman of medium tonnage, was used as a Fleet Air Arm training ship.

A few minutes before planes had been taking off and landing on her flight deck.

Her liberty men, in their "No. 1 suits," were ready to go ashore when she berthed in 15 minutes.

Cause of the disaster—the most serious in Clyde history—is not definitely known.

The roar of the explosion brought people rushing out of their houses in Brodick, Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Irvine, Troon, and Largs, and shattered hundreds of window-panes.

TO RESCUE

More than 20 ships—from destroyers to small coasters—sped towards the stricken carrier.

Eight miles away a man was watching through a powerful telescope.

"I could not believe my eyes," he said. "It seemed only a moment since I had seen the explosion, and now the sea was empty, with rescue ships dashing towards the spot from all directions."

Within seconds of *Dasher's* disappearance, a pool of oil and petrol shot to the surface and caught fire. The surface of the sea blazed fiercely over a wide area. Dense masses of heavy black smoke drifted across the firth.

It was impossible for would-be rescuers to get close to pick up

Carrier blew up in Clyde

CONTINUED

survivors. Barely a hundred swam to safety through the inferno of smoke and flame.

Doctors, ambulance men, and all available cars were rushed to the waterfront after notices had been flashed on local cinema screens appealing for help.

Eighty survivors were brought to the mainland, those less seriously injured being taken in by householders until they could be removed to hospital.

An Ardrossan woman described the explosion as "the most deafening noise imaginable."

"I ran to the window and saw huge clouds of dense black smoke blowing in towards the coast," she added.

James Holmes (19) said that flames gushed out of the ship. They coloured the sky, even though it was still clear daylight. "The blast cracked both our front windows."

CLEARLY SEEN

The aircraft carrier's last moments were seen clearly from Arran, as a fairly strong breeze was blowing the smoke in the opposite direction towards the mainland.

William McAuslin, of the Royal Observer Corps, Brodick, who saw it through binoculars from a hut 300ft. up in the Arran hills, telephoned the authorities the moment he saw smoke belch out of the carrier's stern and sides.

"I had been watching a couple of Swordfish planes practising landings on her flight deck. After sailing quite close inshore she changed course towards the mainland and was stern on to me when I noticed a huge burst of smoke. It subsided a moment later, and a friend who was with me said: 'Do you think she's all right?'"

"The carrier seemed to be on an even keel, but suddenly I said, 'Oh heavens, she's going!' A moment later she sank like a stone. The whole thing—from the explosion to her final disappearance—took only five minutes."

THREE RAFTS

"I still had my glasses trained on the spot. Immediately afterwards I could only see what looked like three rafts on the surface. I counted seven or eight people on one, not so many on the second, and there seemed to be only one on the third."

"A minute or two later the whole sea seemed to be on fire."

Mr. H. P. McWalter, a Brodick hotel keeper and an ex-Merchant Navy man, said: "She went down so quickly that it seemed as if the ship's bottom must have been blown out. Just after the explosion I saw her take a heavy list to starboard. One of her planes slid down the steeply-listing deck and fell into the sea."

"The ship seemed to stand on end while I counted three, then she slid under."

Carrier Sunk By Own Plane

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

BEHIND the announcement by the Admiralty that the escort-carrier *Dasher* was sunk on March 27, 1943, lies the story of the most appalling naval tragedy in the history of the Clyde.

It was a dull, hazy Saturday afternoon when watchers on the Ayrshire and Arran coasts saw a sheet of flame leap from the *Dasher*, then steaming slowly in the main channel, and heard a dull explosion which shattered windows several miles away.

A few minutes later they saw the ship stand on its stern and rapidly disappear.

Nothing was published of the tragedy at the time, all stories being stopped by the censor, who allowed no details to pass.

The *Dasher*, a U.S. merchantman which had been converted into an escort-carrier, and was at the time being used as a Fleet Air Arm training ship, was concluding operations for the day.

On board some hundreds of liberty men were making ready for ashore. Few reached land alive.

The cause of the disaster has never been officially made known, but it is believed that one of the *Dasher's* planes coming in to land misjudged the situation and crashed into a store of oil drums and explosives.

INFERNO OF FLAMES

There was a tremendous shattering roar, and almost immediately the ship was enveloped in an inferno of flames. A minute or two later her bows reared up almost perpendicularly, and she quickly slipped under in a cloud of smoke and steam.

Then followed the most tragic part of all. A number of her crew had jumped overboard or had been hurled into the water by the explosion. Suddenly from the sunken ship a great spout of oil gushed to the surface.

Craft of all kinds, which had hastened to the rescue both from Arran and from Ayrshire ports were driven back, and were for some hours heavily hampered in their rescue efforts by flames and smoke.

Meanwhile, on shore at Ardrossan, an SOS had been sent out. Later in the evening a number of rescued men were landed, and at once rushed to hospital.

Those who had escaped injury or burning were taken to hurriedly-prepared billets. Other survivors landed in Arran were removed to the Arran Cottage Hospital at Lamash. No casualty figures have ever been issued, but it is believed that more than 400 men were lost from a crew of some six hundred.

CARRIER SANK IN CLYDE

Explosion Caused Heavy Casualties

The escort carrier H.M.S. *Dasher*, whose loss was announced by the Admiralty on Thursday, sank after a violent explosion in the Firth of Clyde on March 27, 1943. No details of the incident were passed by the censor at the time.

About 5 o'clock on that Saturday evening a violent explosion shook houses in Arran and the Ayrshire coast. The *Dasher* was seen to be on fire, and sank within a few minutes. Other vessels quickly organised rescue parties, and many survivors were picked up.

Wounded were taken to hospitals in Arran, and special arrangements were made at Ardrossan for the reception of victims.

Urgent calls were sent out for ambulances and W.V.S. personnel. A number of the uninjured officers and men were billeted in the town.

The total casualty list has not been disclosed so far by the Admiralty, but it is understood that it was fairly heavy, both in killed and injured.

It is believed that the disaster was caused by an aircraft which failed to make a good landing on the flight deck, and crashed into a store of explosive charges at the stern of the vessel.

Blew Up in Clyde

A VIOLENT explosion on board a naval vessel in the Firth of Clyde is recalled to many coast dwellers by the Admiralty announcement yesterday that the escort carrier *Dasher* was lost on March 27, 1943.

No details of the incident were allowed to be published at the time, but it was obvious to eye-witnesses that a major disaster had occurred among a number of large naval vessels anchored off Arran.

In the late afternoon a violent explosion shook houses on Arran and the Ayrshire coast.

The *Dasher* was seen to be on fire and within a few minutes the vessel sank.

Casualties Not Disclosed

Other vessels quickly organised rescue parties, and many survivors were picked up. Wounded were conveyed to hospitals in Arran and Ardrossan, and Civil Defence and W.V.S. personnel also rendered excellent service.

Uninjured officers and men were billeted in the town, and local emergency clothing stocks were used to provide outfits.

The total casualty list has not yet been disclosed, but it is understood that it was fairly heavy both in killed and injured.

The disaster is believed to have been caused by an aircraft failing to make a good landing on the flight deck. The aeroplane, it is said, crashed into a store of explosive charges at the stern of the vessel.

A Board of Enquiry under the presidency of Captain Guy Grantham, CB, DSO, took place on March 30 and 31, 1943, on board the escort aircraft-carrier *Archer*. After hearing evidence from survivors of the stricken vessel and from crew members of the rescuing vessels, the Board reported as follows:

'HMS *DASHER* sank at approximately 16.48 on 27th March in approximate position 205 degrees Cumbrae Island light 5 miles. Commanding Officer and 148 of her ship's company survived out of a total of 527.

(i) The original explosion took place either in the after depth charge magazine or the main petrol stowage. These two compartments are adjacent to one another.

(ii) There is no evidence that the explosion

The first public knowledge that the *Dasher* had been lost came more than two years after the disaster. The report of the Board of Enquiry was still classified and press reports at the time made erroneous comment regarding the cause. Even the Enquiry's total of the ship's complement of 527 was incorrect, it actually being 507.

occurred in the depth charge magazine beyond the fact that this is located in the region of the explosion.

(iii) There is no direct proof that the explosion started in the main petrol stowage but evidence shows that there may have been an accumulation of petrol vapour in the main petrol compartment and that this could have been ignited by a man smoking in the shaft tunnel or through someone dropping a cigarette end down from the Fleet Air Arm mess-deck to the petrol control compartment below.

It is pointed out that the lighting system is not up to magazine lighting specification and that a fault on the system could have ignited petrol vapour when the lights were switched on or off.

The Board also issued the following recommendations for vessels similar to *Dasher*:

'(i) Access to petrol control compartments should be trunked up to the deck of the hangar, as in *ARCHER*, and in no case to a crew space.

(ii) The shaft tunnel should be fitted with a ventilating system.

Today the aircraft carrier lies upright in 170 metres of water at 55°37'45"N, 05°00'53"W with the flight deck some 30 metres above the seabed. In 1986, one of our readers, John G. Hall of Stewarton, Ayrshire, became interested in the mystery behind her sinking and carried out more research. He felt strongly that the loss of over 370 souls in the worst-ever disaster off the Ayrshire coast should not be forgotten and he began a campaign to have a memorial erected to their memory. Finally, six months before the 50th anniversary of the sinking in March 1993, the Royal Naval Association took up his cause and undertook to organise the erection of a suitable monument at Ardrossan, the nearest town to where she lay.

(iii) All carriers to be supplied at the earliest possible moment with portable petrol detector gauges.

(iv) All carriers to be instructed to carry out rigidly magazine and petrol regulations, and that all defects in petrol systems are to be reported to the Commanding Officer immediately they are discovered.'

The Board concluded that 'The behaviour and bearing of the officers and ratings was exemplary throughout. Petty Officer Stamp, RNVR, assisted many young ratings to safety but lost his life in so doing. Petty Officer Telegraphist Terry displayed a similar spirit and example and was also lost.

'Two small coasting vessels, the SS LITH-IUM and SS CRAGSMAN gave valuable assistance in rescuing men from the sea, working close to the oil burning on the water.'

The following message from C-in-C Home Fleet was sent to officers commanding carriers *Archer*, *Activity*, *Biter*, *Battler*, *Hunter*, *Attacker* and *Stalker*:

'As a result of investigations into the loss of HMS Dasher, it has been proved that the cause of the disaster was due to internal explosion, probably petrol. Recommendations as above.'

Wartime censorship prevented news of the disaster being made known at the time and, with the exception of those personally involved, the incident was in danger of being forgotten with no public recognition of the event. However, after a long letter-writing campaign by the author of this article, some six months before the 50th anniversary, the Royal Naval Association undertook to organise a permanent memorial to those lost in the disaster, culminating in an emotional day for survivors, relatives, friends and the townsfolk of Ardrossan.

A parade headed by the band from HMS *Neptune* — the Clyde submarine base at Faslane — and a detachment from HMS *Gannet* at Prestwick, followed by ex-Servicemen, Sea Cadets, Air Training Corps, and youth groups, marched through the town to a service in Barony St John's Church. In attendance were the Commodore Clyde, Commodore John Trewby, RN; the Lord Lieutenant for Ayrshire and Arran, Major Richard Henderson; and dignitaries from Cunninghame District Council. After the church service, a dedication and wreath-laying ceremony was held in a sunken garden on the seafront.

The pink granite stone was unveiled by Brenda Mackay, wife of the Royal Naval Association (Scottish Area) chairman, Mac Mackay, Commodore Trewby and *Dasher* survivor James McGloin.

Five helicopters from HMS *Gannet*'s No. 819 Squadron released wreaths on behalf of the Royal Navy and the RAF over the spot

Thanks be to him. Through the tenacity of John Hall's endeavours, he has ensured the memory of those who died shall not be forgotten.



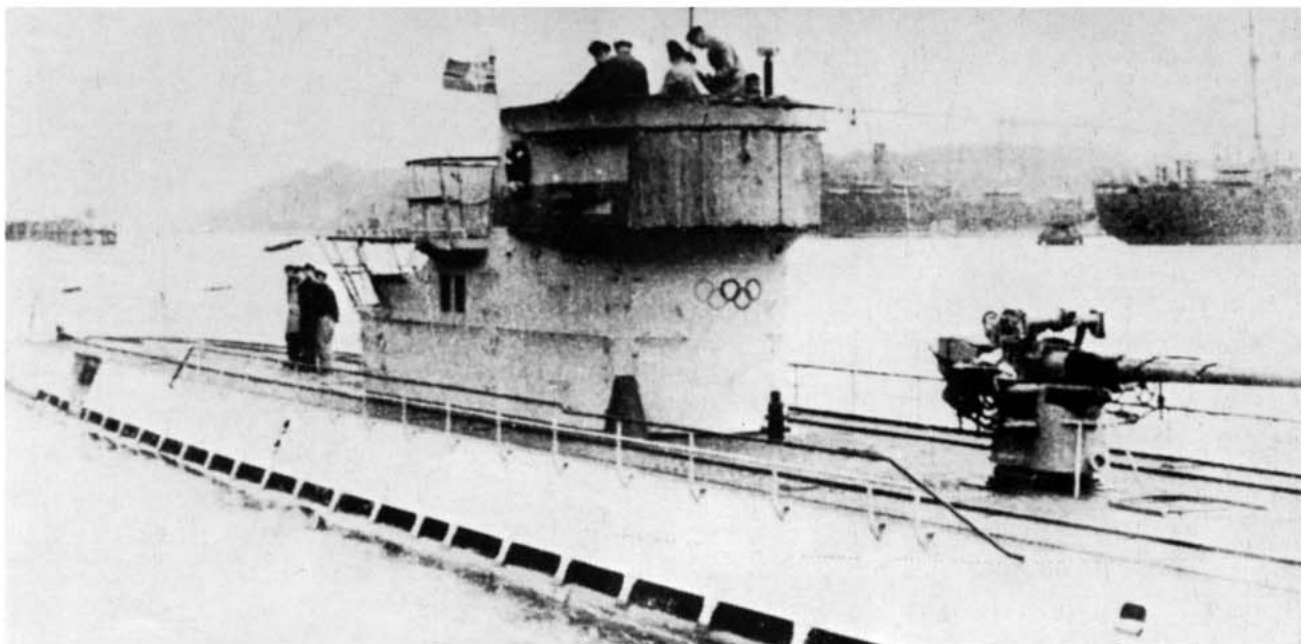
Guard of Honour, pictured by Leading Photographer Webb, from HMS *Gannet* (an RN shore establishment at Prestwick) at the dedication ceremony on March 27, 1993.

where *Dasher* lies in 310 fathoms and then performed a fly-past as the memorial dedication service concluded.

A Civic Reception by Cunninghame District Council for 200 guests followed in the Civic Centre at Ardrossan where Com-

modore Trewby proposed the toast to HMS *Dasher*. A letter from Her Majesty the Queen was read out, and the handful of survivors were presented to those in attendance, who, with eyewitnesses, recalled the events of that day exactly 50 years before.





On Monday, August 23, 1993, German and Allied Second World War veterans, together with salvagers and press representatives from all over the world, gathered on the tiny island of Anholt, halfway between Sweden and Denmark, to witness the surfacing of a sunken German submarine believed to contain a treasure and secret documents. The men who sailed on *U-534* and the aircrew which sank it were the heart of the story and when the tip of the U-Boat's deck-mounted gun broke surface after 48 years on the Danish seabed, some of them had tears in their eyes as their memories went back to the last days of the war.

The final phase of World War II saw a marked deterioration of Germany's overall war situation. The Ardennes offensive had proved a failure, while the great Russian offensive, which opened in mid-January, brought about a complete collapse on the Eastern Front. On January 28, 1945, the Russians established a bridgehead on the left bank of the River Oder, only 30 kilometres from Camp Coralle, the U-Boat and Naval Staff Headquarters. However, the gravity of the situation did not affect the plans to continue the U-Boat campaign, except in so far as operations had to be intensified for the relief of enemy pressure against German coastal communications. The Allies' insistence on unconditional surrender whereby Germany would be split into separate zones, led to the decision to fight and hold out at all costs. Therefore the Kriegsmarine's first task was to evacuate from the path of the advancing Russians as many civilians and fighting men as possible. From February onwards, merchant vessels, aided subsequently by almost every serviceable warship, were used to transport troops and wounded from Lithuania and East Prussia. Later, they were devoted mainly to the rescue of refugees from East Prussia and Pomerania. At the same time, heavy warships bombarded the coast in support of the land battle for the Baltic ports. As far as the U-Boats were concerned, Memel, Pillau, Danzig and Gotenhafen (Gdynia) all had to be abandoned as bases, and the use of U-Boats for transport purposes on their passage to the West enabled officers and men to witness at first hand the indescribable misery of their compatriots.

The great Russian offensive on the Oder front achieved a decisive breakthrough, and on April 24, on Hitler's orders, Grossadmiral Dönitz and the rest of his staff moved from Berlin to Plön, in Schleswig-Holstein. All

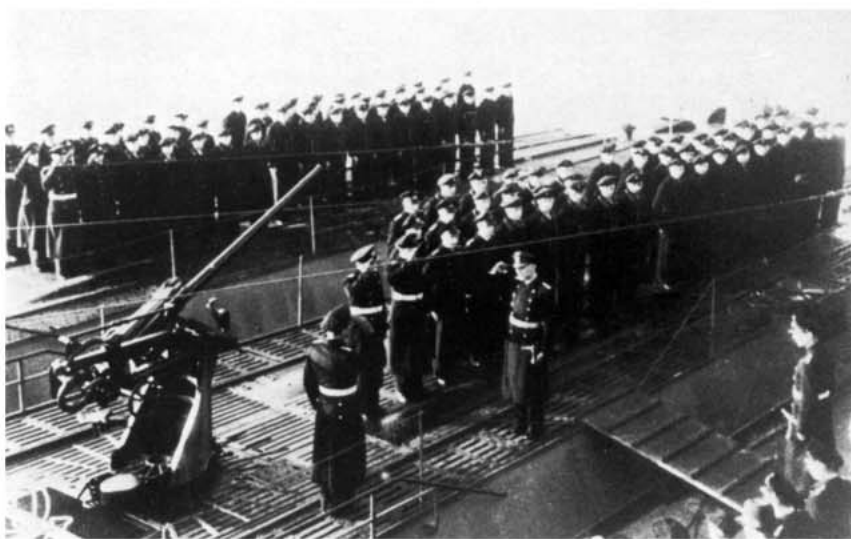
U-534 — THE MYSTERY BOAT

By Jan Heitmann

those warships and merchant vessels which had managed to leave eastern Baltic and North Sea ports ahead of the Allied advance, and were not engaged on transport duty, had now assembled in the western Baltic, while, by the end of April, nearly 200 U-Boats had arrived in the Schleswig-Holstein bases. Dönitz was preparing to surrender the Kriegsmarine on his own responsibility, when, in the evening of April 30, to his great surprise, he received a message from Berlin appointing him Hitler's successor. Conscious that an orderly capitulation was essential if further bloodshed was to be avoided, he also still intended to save as many people as possible from Russian captivity, and attempted to gain time for the further transfer of troops and refugees by negotiating with the western Allies for a separate surrender. That same day, instructions were issued for the scuttling of the fleet. The code-word for this operation was 'Regenbogen' (Rainbow), upon receipt of which all warships were to be sunk or destroyed.

On May 2, at Flensburg, where U-Boat Command and Dönitz had established their last headquarters, the instructions were handed out to the U-Boat commanders assembled there from the boats lying in the western Baltic ports. At the same time, all boats capable of diving were ordered to move to Norway, away from the threat of attack from low-flying aircraft and to a position where it was thought that their presence, in large numbers, might strengthen the hand of the German representatives in their negotiations with the British 21st Army Group.

Since the beginning of April, Allied aircraft had been operating unchallenged over the western Baltic and Kattegat in daylight, and had already sunk five U-Boats on passage through the latter straits. The sudden exodus to Norway was therefore quickly spotted, and the RAF concentrated large numbers of aircraft in the area. In the



Above: The *U-534* (with *U-535* behind) under Kapitänleutnant Ellmenreich on the day of her commissioning: December 23, 1942. Top: *U-534* in late 1943 when the U-Boat belonged to 2. U-Flottille. (UBAC)

absence of any Luftwaffe opposition, these aircraft were able to range over the whole of the Kattegat, even into bays and harbours, destroying 21 U-Boats within a four-day period.

On May 3, Dönitz's parlementaires proceeded to Field-Marshal Montgomery's headquarters to negotiate a separate surrender. Montgomery agreed to accept the surrender of the North German area on condition that Holland, Denmark and the German fleet were included and that no weapons or ships would be destroyed before the surrender, which was to take effect from 8 a.m. on May 5. This meant handing over every available unit of the Kriegsmarine, a heavy blow to Dönitz, since any such action would violate German naval tradition and every concept of military honour.

With heavy heart, Dönitz accepted, in order not to prejudice the chances of escape of the eastern armies and the refugees. Details of the surrender terms were transmitted to all German forces and on May 4 all U-Boats at sea were ordered to cease hostilities and to return to base immediately. However, the commanders of U-Boats in the western Baltic, who had already prepared their boats for scuttling in accordance with the 'Regenbogen' orders, were of the opinion that the orders forbidding the sinking of their ships was contrary to Dönitz's real intention. Therefore, they scuttled their boats that night, a total of 218 ending up on the bottom.

After further negotiations with Eisenhower, the general surrender came into force at 00.01 a.m. on May 9, the Allied demand for the German fleet to be handed over intact having been passed to the U-Boats on the previous day. In complying with this order, the U-Boats duly surfaced and, flying the black flag, all the operational boats proceeded to their allotted surrender ports, the Allies taking over 154 boats all told.

One of the U-Boats which made off for the safe Norwegian bases in early May and eventually fell victim to enemy aircraft, was *U-534*. Launched in Hamburg in September 1942 and commissioned on December 23, *U-534* was a type IX C40 long-range ocean-going vessel with a range of more than 11,000 nautical miles. Her early operations took her on meteorological-observation duty to the North Atlantic until the late summer of 1944, its commanding officer, Kapitänleutnant Hermann Nollau, serving on the submarine until she was sunk.

In August 1944, *U-534* called at the U-Boat base at Bordeaux to be fitted with a Schnorchel device to enable her to use her diesel engines when submerged. She then sailed from Bordeaux to Flensburg, via the North Atlantic, during which voyage the boat shot down a Wellington bomber but encountered serious technical problems. She reached Flensburg in late October 1944 and joined 33. U-Flottille as a non-operational U-Boat. For five months from November 1944, she was laid up in the Stettin shipyard.

Fully armed and equipped, *U-534* left Kiel U-Boat base in the early morning of May 2, 1945, Kapitänleutnant Nollau having been ordered to sail to Kristiansand in the south of Norway and to await further orders there. At first, the voyage passed uneventfully and the boat spent the night of May 4-5 submerged. Thus, lying silently on the bottom of the Baltic, *U-534* did not receive the order to return to her home base and she continued on her course for Norway. However, at 1.39 p.m. on May 5, the day after the German forces in the Baltic and northern Europe area surrendered, *U-534* was making her way through the Kattegat, in the company of two other boats, when they were spotted by two Liberators of No. 18 Group of RAF Coastal Command. The first aircraft of No. 547 Squadron was shot down by one of the U-Boats, which began to dive, there being

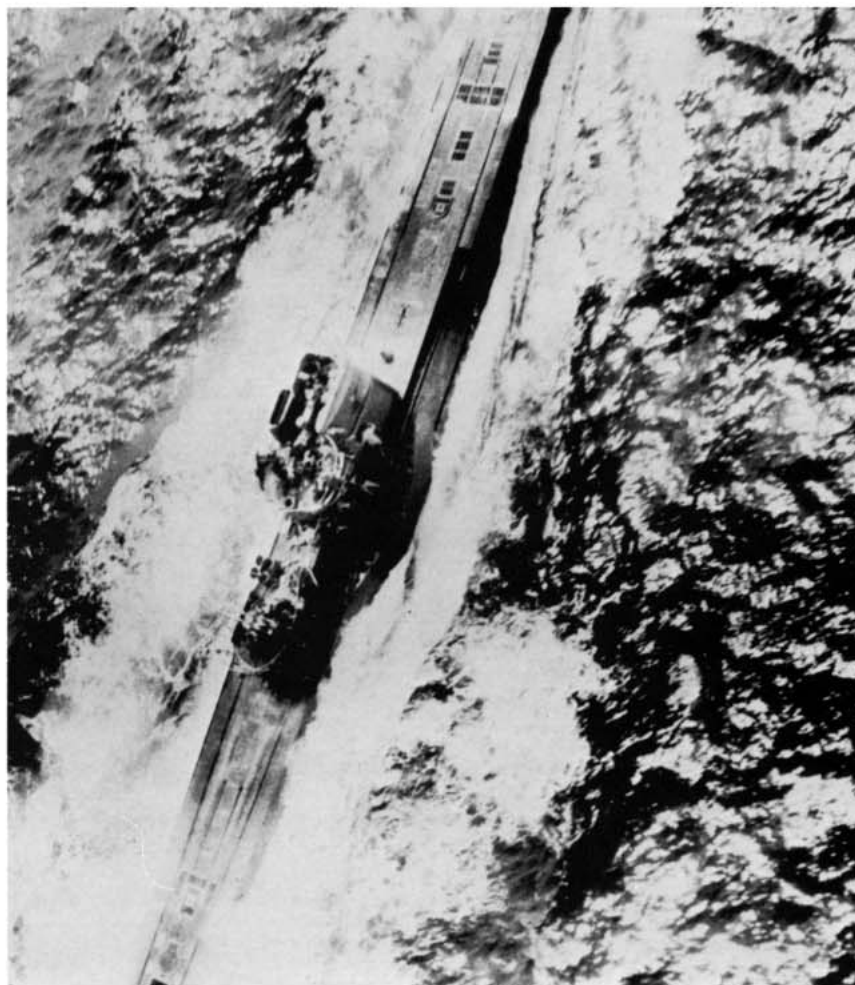


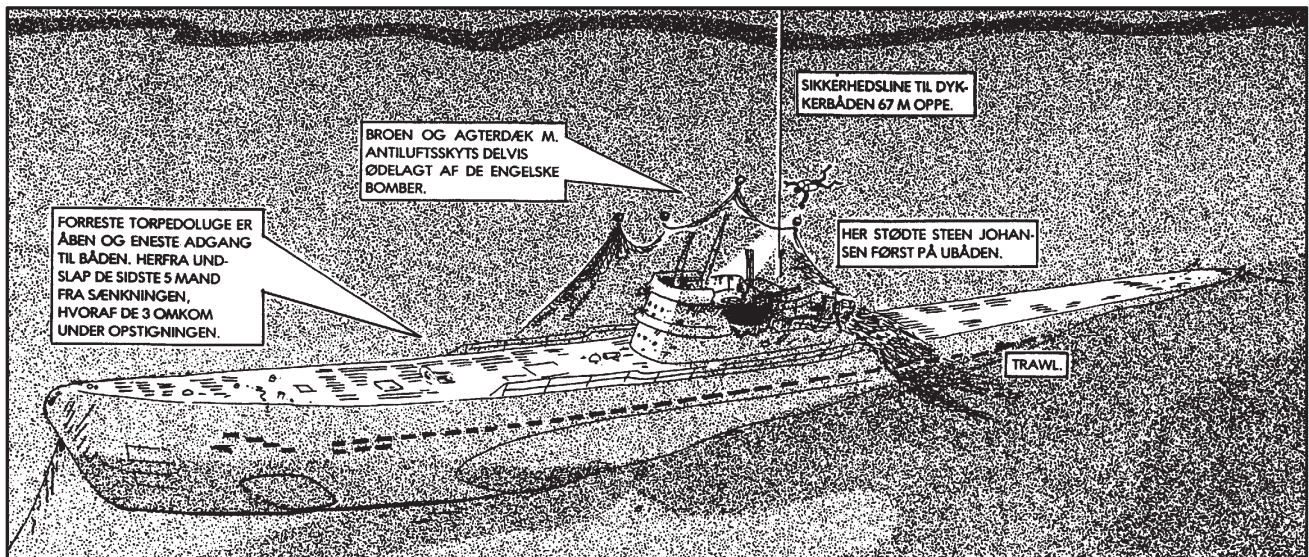
On May 5, 1945, as the U-Boat was proceeding through the Kattegat (the strait between Denmark and Sweden), the crew (above) of Liberators KH347 achieved two direct hits. In the picture below, the order has been given to abandon ship and crew members can be seen climbing down the conning tower. (UBAC)

one survivor. The second Liberator, KH347, 'G' George of No. 86 Squadron, piloted by Warrant Officer John Nichol, launched its attack on the only U-Boat still on the surface and on its second run dropped four depth charges. Two hit aft, one right behind the conning tower, the other striking the deck before exploding in the water, wrecking the stern.

Kapitänleutnant Nollau gave orders to abandon ship and most of the crew of 52 managed to reach the deck before the boat sank stern-first at the position 56°39'N,

11°48'E, taking down five crewmen in the forward torpedo compartment. However, the trapped men below deck were able to escape through the torpedo hatch a little later when the boat settled on the bottom. A Kriegsmarine vessel, *Wachtschiff 101*, being on patrol nearby, immediately started to pick up the survivors, although three crewmen succumbed from cold, exposure and injuries. Once on board, Nollau wired his report, informing U-Boat Command about the circumstances of the loss. The next day, the U-Boat crew were landed at Aarhus.





For nearly half a century, *U-534* rested in her watery grave on the Kattegat seabed. However, it was not an undisturbed sleep because of stories that the boat had been carrying treasures and secret documents when it went down. These rumours were mainly based on the fact that the boat was of a type designed for long trans-ocean missions and that it belonged to 33. U-Flottille whose main task was to transport valuable cargo to Japan. Other U-Boats of that flotilla, which were either seized or surrendered, were found to be carrying valuable materials and documents hidden in specially-modified compartments. One, *U-234* under the command of Kapitänleutnant Johann-Heinrich Fehler, which surrendered off the US coast on May 18, had uranium and mercury hidden in the hull, blueprints for rockets, pieces of the Me 262 fighter aircraft, a Luftwaffe general and even two Japanese rocket experts, who committed suicide!

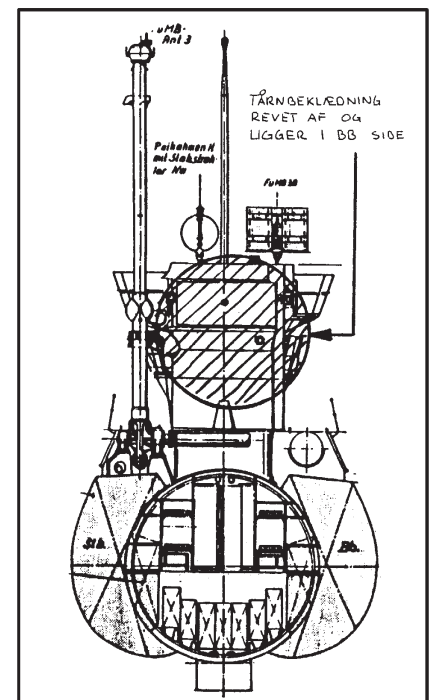
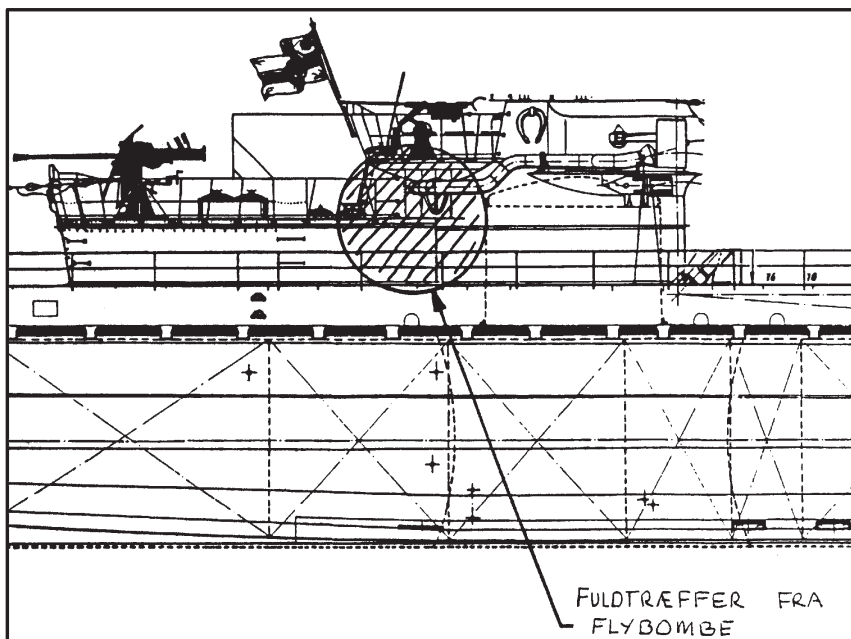
Speculation about the contents of *U-534* ranged from secret documents, war booty and valuables of all kinds, paintings and artifacts to gold, jewellery, currency and a 'Nazi treasure' of immense value. According to these rumours, the secret cargo was stored in hidden compartments which had been added

to the boat while it was undergoing major repairs in Stettin. It was also suggested that high-ranking Nazis and military leaders had attempted to escape from the Allies aboard *U-534* when the Reich collapsed. Even the names of Eva Braun, Martin Bormann and Joseph Mengele were brought into play to make the story more sensational. It was even said that the SS had given a special 'SS transport order No. 1744' to the Kriegsmarine to secure smooth escape of top Nazis and their valuables to Argentina or Japan. The existence of such an order is unknown to historians who doubt that the Kriegsmarine ever received any instructions from the SS. Besides, Dönitz, being already the head of the state and supreme commander of the Wehrmacht on the day *U-534* sailed from Kiel, would never have permitted Nazi officials to use one of his U-Boats for their own purposes.

The air of mystery was heightened by the fact that British military records indicate that

there was considerable activity by air from Berlin to Kiel on the nights before *U-534*'s departure. However, on the night before the submarine sailed, the city was set ablaze by 126 Mosquito fighter-bombers and anyone would have found it almost impossible to reach Kiel from Berlin. Notwithstanding, the rumours continued to flourish, the press referring to the *U-534* as 'one of World War II's major mysteries' and 'the Nazi treasure submarine'. Although it appeared useless to stress that all this was nothing but fiction, the stories about a secret cargo aboard *U-534* occupied the minds of military enthusiasts, journalists, sub-aqua divers and treasure-seekers for decades.

To the latter group belonged Aage Jensen, a professional Danish diver and his partner, Steen Johannsen. In August 1986, they reported that, following a long, systematic search of the waters around the small Danish island of Anholt, they had found a U-Boat about 25 kilometres off the island. Lying in a



Left: 'Damage to *U-534*.' The extent of the destruction to the conning tower. Right: 'Covering from the tower torn off and lying at "BB" side.' (UBAC)

crevice 67 metres below the surface, the boat was in a remarkable good condition. With the help of Horst Bredow, head of the 'Stiftung Traditionsarchiv Unterseeboote' in Cuxhaven and one of Germany's leading experts in U-Boat matters, the submarine was reliably identified as *U-534*. However, it seems that this is only half the story as there is ample evidence that the very first discovery of *U-534* actually occurred in 1977 when Jensen reported that he had found a submarine off the Anholt coast. The records suggest that in fact he had discovered two boats, *U-534* and *U-251* (sunk on April 19, 1945 by enemy aircraft) which were lying close together. The latter was not of interest to him, because permission to recover the submarine was refused after the German authorities had declared the vessel a war grave due to the many who had perished when she went down. The reason that the *U-534* was 'discovered' for a second time in 1986 would seem to be because when Jensen dived on the boat for the first time, nobody was really interested. Since then, Wolfgang Petersen's film epic *Das Boot* had aroused a worldwide interest in U-Boat warfare and Jensen, looking for financiers to raise the boat, now saw the opportunity to realise his project. He was proved right and his discovery received enormous press coverage.

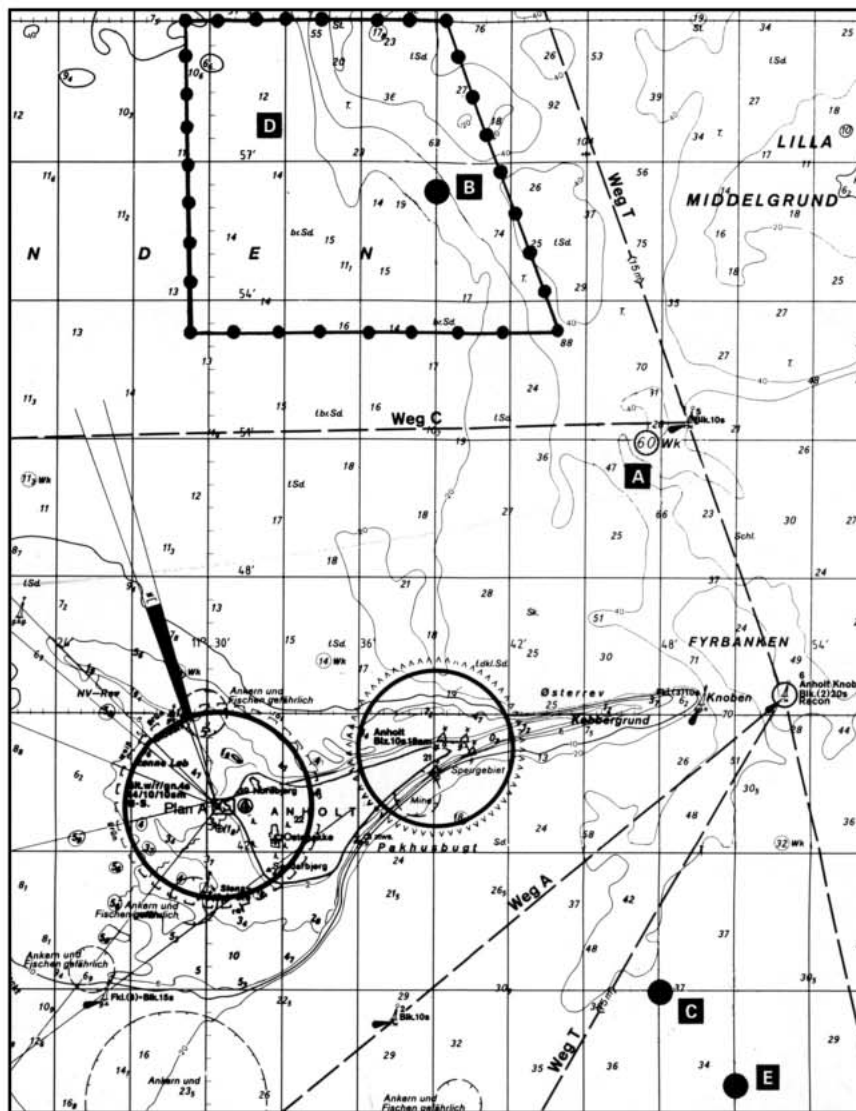
This time he had no problem in finding financial backing through a Danish-Dutch consortium, with the Danish publisher and businessman, Karsten Ree, acting as the main sponsor to finance the £2 million salvage operation. (Jensen sold the salvage rights to Karsten Ree who has the intention of turning the U-Boat into a museum.) However, it still took a couple of years before the preparations for the difficult recovery operation were completed. The consortium was granted permission by the Danish authorities to raise the boat, whereupon they contracted the world-famous Dutch salvage company, Smit Tak to carry out the task.

Salvage work began on August 2, 1993 with a diving survey, the cutting away of old fishing nets covering the tower, and the removal of mud surrounding the vessel using a huge underwater vacuum cleaner. The Dutch marine salvage experts, operating the huge floating cranes *Taklift 4* and *Takcrane 1*, then dredged three channels in the seabed underneath the U-Boat so that steel cables could be passed beneath her. On Tuesday, August 17, Smit Tak raised the boat from the sea bottom, without having it break surface but leaving it suspended some 36 metres below the waves. In this position, it was then moved some three miles to calmer waters for the actual raising. However, this operation was then delayed by high winds that made it impossible for the floating cranes to further lift the vessel.

The boat's resurrection was not only watched by journalists and naval enthusiasts but also by eight German survivors of the U-Boat and four Allied airmen from the *Liberator* which had sent it to the bottom.

Because of the possible danger from unexploded ordnance, the air and sea space around the wreck site was completely sealed off, and a Danish environment protection vessel was standing by in case of acid or fuel leakages. At 10.45 a.m. on Monday, August 23, *U-534* finally rose clear of the water. The barrels of the anti-aircraft gun broke surface first, then the hull emerged, slung in a cradle of cables from the floating cranes.

After spending 48 years under water, the remains of the *U-534* broke the surface on Monday morning, August 23, 1993. The Dutch salvage vessel *Taklift 4* with a lifting capacity of 2400 tonnes, aided by *Takcrane 1* (2720 tonnes), raised the 1200-tonne U-Boat even though some 400 tons of mud were clinging to the hull. (AP)

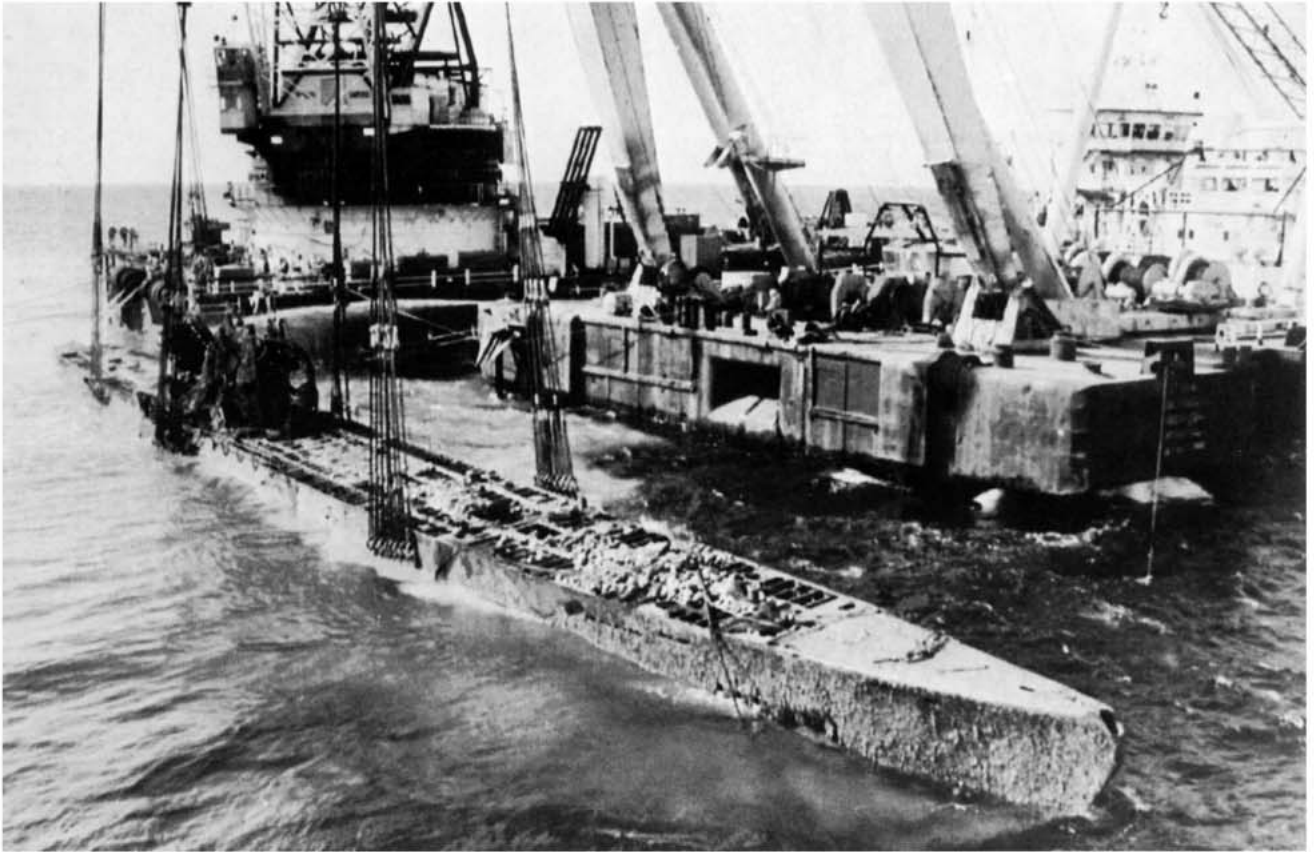


[A] The position where *U-534* was found by the Danish divers (56°51'0"N, 11°47'4"E). The annotation '60 WK' on the chart indicates that the existence of a wreck at this position at a depth of approximately 60 metres was already known to the German Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie (Federal Board for Shipping and Hydrography, the authority for compiling the charts). [B] Before the final raising of the *U-534* could start, the boat had to be lifted and towed into more shallow waters to position 56°56'3"N, 11°38'8"E. Here, the U-Boat was finally brought to the surface. [C] The position recorded in Kriegsmarine files where *U-534* was officially reported sunk. [D] The area sealed off while salvage work was in progress. [E] Position of *U-251* sunk April 19, 1945.







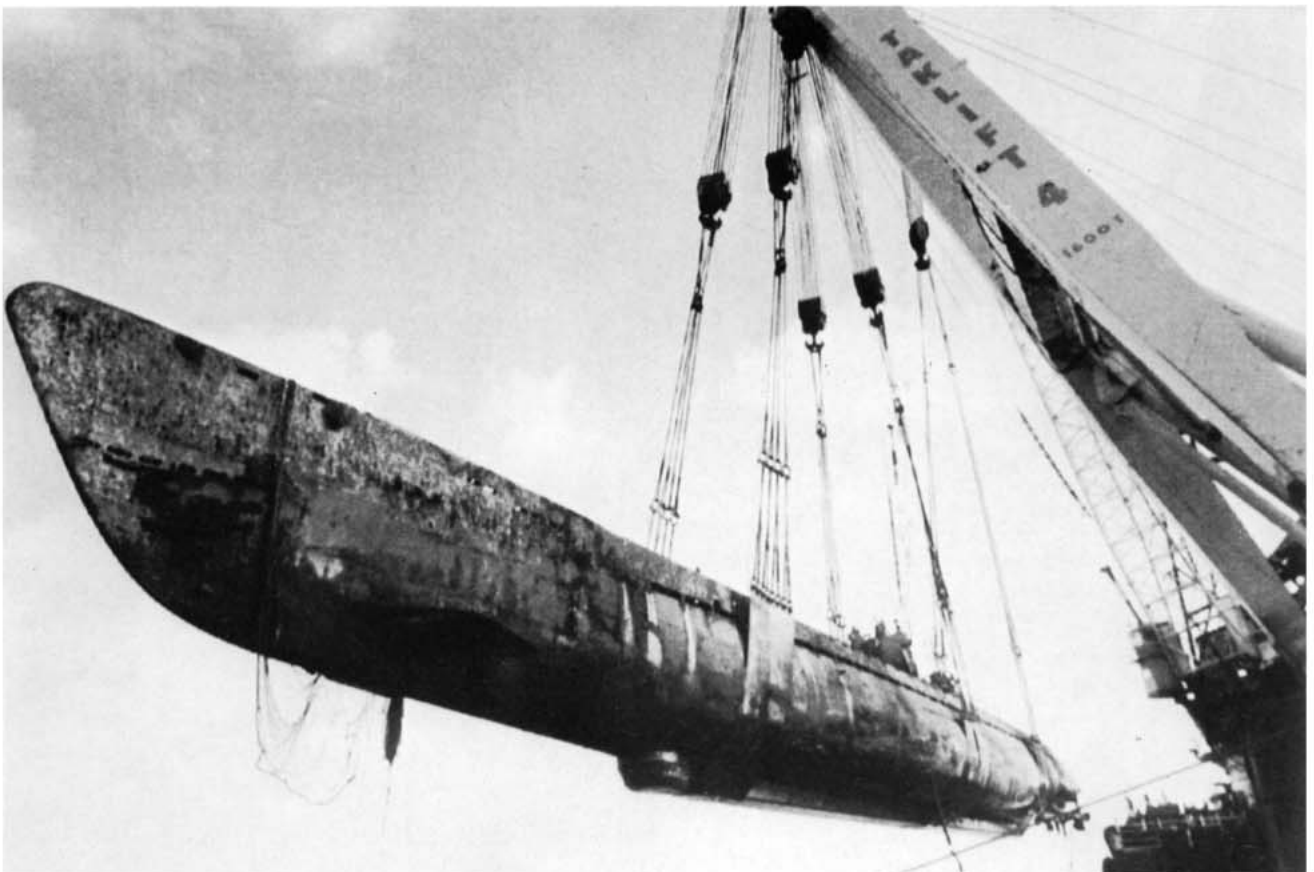


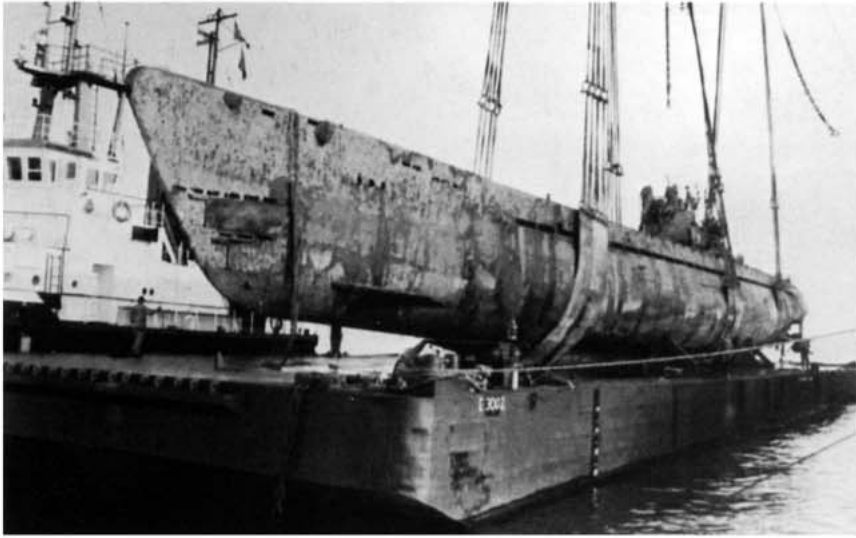
After removing the excess weight, the U-Boat was lifted clear of the water almost like a toy. (AP)

U-534 was initially raised to her original operational waterline without any oil spillage. Then a pumping operation removed some 400 tons of clay that was stuck between the inner and outer hulls to make the vessel

light enough to enable it to be lifted onto a submersible off-shore barge. Apart from extensive superficial damage caused to the periscope and the conning tower by the wartime explosion, fishing nets and corros-

ion, the boat was in very good shape, much better than the consortium could have hoped. The hull was only slightly corroded and even retained patches of its original grey colour.





U-534 was then lowered onto a submersible off-shore barge for its journey to Hirtshals in North Jutland where its contents were to be examined. (AP)

A search for treasure and secret documents on board had to wait until all ordnance had been removed as it was feared that the ammunition might have deteriorated and become dangerously unstable. After it had been pumped out, Captain Finn Linne-mann, a Danish Navy explosives specialist, together with a Dutch Royal Navy salvage officer, Bert Kleijwegt, boarded the U-Boat. They found the shells in the deck lockers still in excellent condition, and once the two deck hatches had been prised open, ammunition disposal specialists entered the interior of the boat and began disarming torpedoes, detonators and shells, a risky and slow job which lasted a couple of days. One of them said that the interior was an indescribable mess, but although three-quarters of the vessel had been filled with water, the officers' quarters and the radio room were dry behind watertight hatches, closed by crewmen before they abandoned ship. Parts of the living quarters and storage space had also been preserved by large air bubbles.

After the explosives — 13 torpedoes, some 150 rounds of 37mm ammunition and 300 20mm shells — had been removed, the boat was transported by barge to a dry dock in the Danish North Sea port of Hirtshals in north Jutland where a team of conservation experts continued the long task of examining the wreck and removing and registering its contents. (The disposal of the torpedoes and other ordnance was carried out by the Dutch Navy on August 28.)

Ree and his partners had believed that the discovery would unravel some of the mysteries surrounding the last days of the Thousand-Year Reich, but in this their hopes were disappointed because the items found in the boat have not proved to be out of the ordinary. Early investigations of the boat's interior revealed that the fine mud on the seabed had preserved many objects. The light bulbs, for instance, remained intact, and cups and saucers were unbroken. Three pairs of binoculars were uncovered together with a smoker's pipe, clothes, gasmasks, a box of condoms and a hundred bottles of a German 1936-vintage wine, many still tightly corked. Inside a metal box belonging to a crew member, a slide rule, cravat and nose drops were found.

However, the salvagers were not too disappointed because there was still the commander's safe to be inspected. Before the U-Boat went down, someone had tried to save its contents, and when the salvagers entered the room, the key to the safe's upper compartment was still in the lock, attached to an officer's fob with three other keys, part of

a chain and a whistle. The silence was broken only by dripping water and the creak of the safe door swinging on its hinges. Conservationists were ecstatic when they realised that the safe was full with papers. The documents were so tightly packed that they remained sealed. Many were legible. Each bundle of handwritten records, typed notes, printed papers and military drawings was carefully numbered, sealed in polythene and temporarily stored in a freezer. Hans-Christian Bjerg, archivist and historian of the Danish State Archive, had the opportunity of checking the papers before they were sealed and he stated that they were not secret or incriminating documents but merely nautical material and technical data which were a standard part of the inventory on all U-Boats.

So far, the most valuable items to be retrieved have been two rare, passive,

acoustic guidance torpedoes. There is no indication that U-534 had carried any treasures or secret items, which came as no surprise to the survivors of the U-Boat as they had always expressed serious scepticism about the possibility of finding any such thing, let alone bodies. They reiterated that there had been no Nazi official on board, and no treasure.

At the time of writing (December 1993), it remains unclear who has the rights to the contents of U-534, although valuables which can be proved to have been stolen from occupied territories remain the property of their original owners. Other items on board are technically the property of the German Ministry of Defence. However, the Danish state laid claim to valuables found in their territorial waters and a 74-year-old Norwegian salvage diver, Einar Hoevding, maintains that after the war he obtained salvage rights to all German wartime property off Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The Italian Embassy in Denmark is also reported by one source to have put in a bid for a sealed strong box known to them to be aboard. This is particularly interesting as Italy had broken its alliance with Germany 21 months before the U-Boat was sunk.

However, those who survived one of World War II's last battles at sea are not interested in the legal wrangling surrounding the affair. After the salvage operation, the veterans, all now in their seventies, who watched the raising of U-534 with great excitement, attended a reunion party in the Casablanca Restaurant in Anholt. For them, 48 years had put events into perspective and wartime hatreds had long been forgotten. Eight German seamen and four Allied airmen avidly discussed the early afternoon attack by the two Liberators and swapped wartime reminiscences. Then they started to sing wartime songs, including *Lilli Marlene* and *Waltzing Matilda* at a celebration which went on into the early hours. By the time they returned home, the secret of U-534 had been revealed: that there was really no secret after all!



It was soon evident that far from there being any secrets on board, the items recovered were 'run-of-the-mill', and those to be expected on any wartime U-Boat. Nevertheless, many were well preserved as some of the watertight doors had held and air pockets had protected other areas. Here, newspaper owner and salvage sponsor Karsten Ree examines one of the screws of the vessel he plans to restore and display as a museum piece. (AP)



PANZER ATTACK IN LORRAINE

In February 1944, the directive issued to the newly-appointed supreme Allied commander by the Combined Chiefs-of-Staff instructed General Eisenhower 'to undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces'. The planners at the Supreme Commander's headquarters (SHAEF) had agreed that if the ultimate goal was Berlin — the 'political heart' of the Reich — the industrial area of the Ruhr was its vital 'economic heart'. Assuming that the Germans would commit large forces to defend it, SHAEF had decided that an attack on the Ruhr would at the same time cripple the German war production and destroy the forces trying to defend it.

There were four routes from northern France to Germany but, even prior to D-Day, SHAEF had ruled out two of them owing to the difficulty of the terrain. Both lay in Belgium: the easily-flooded plains of Flanders to the north and the hilly woodland of the Ardennes. They had instead decided in favour of a broad front and had recommended a deep penetration on both sides of the Ardennes. The main line of advance would be north of the Ardennes along the line Amiens-Maubeuge-Liège to the Ruhr while a subsidiary attack would go south along the line Verdun-Metz to Frankfurt. The latter approach was thought to be less favourable with more difficult tank country, less sites suitable for airfields, and only a narrow exit east from the Frankfurt area.

After the success of the breakout at Avranches, the Allied armies had secured the area between the Seine and Loire (designated in the 'Overlord' plan as the 'Initial Lodgement Area') as early as August 25, ten

days ahead of the 'Overlord' timetable. By the end of the month, the last German troops west of the Seine river had been mopped up and by September 1 the Allied forces were across the river, without having encountered

By Jean Paul Pallud

the stubborn opposition that had been expected.



Frequently mis-identified and wrongly captioned, these pictures are now correctly established as having been taken in September 1944, in Lorraine in eastern France, when the 5. Panzerarmee attempted to counter the advance of the US Third Army. *Top:* A brand new Panther Ausf. G belonging to Panzerbrigade 111. *Above:* Oberleutnant Horst Gittermann (with map) and Oberleutnant Walter Penzler of the I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 16 of 116. Panzer-Division (hence the 'Windhund' badge on their caps) in discussion with General Hasso von Manteuffel, the commander of 5. Panzerarmee. The I. Abteilung with its Panthers had been integrated into Panzerbrigade 111 at the beginning of September. (BA)



As it applied to the troops' dispositions in August, the SHAEF recommendation meant that the 21st Army Group of Field-Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery would strike north-east towards Liège, while at the same time the 12th Army Group under Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley would push towards Metz and the Saar. However, this plan proved impossible to implement as the supply system was unable to cope with the requirements of both army groups and the Allies realised that they would have to concentrate their efforts. Moreover, by then it seemed likely that the northern drive would not only bring them to Antwerp, a badly-needed port, but would also seize the launching sites of the V-weapons in the Pas-de-Calais area. Eisenhower therefore decided to give priority to the left and ordered that the First US Army should support Montgomery from Paris to Brussels, Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges was to send two corps advancing on the right flank of Lieutenant-General Miles Dempsey's Second British Army. Meanwhile, Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third Army was to continue to advance eastward as far as the Marne sector. On August 24, Eisenhower wrote to General George C. Marshall, the US Chief-of-Staff: 'I was of the belief that we could carry out the operation to the north-east simultaneously with a thrust east, but later have concluded that due to the tremendous importance of the objectives in the north-east we must first concentrate on that movement'.

Though hampered by shortage of supplies, the Third Army pressed on eastwards and on September 11, as the logistical situation was improving, these troops of the 134th Infantry, 35th Infantry Division, were pictured fording the Madon river at Pierreville, south of Nancy. The Moselle is just five kilometres away. (NA)

THE THIRD US ARMY

On August 31, Combat Command A (CCA) of the US 4th Armored Division reached the Meuse river at Commercy and Pont-sur-Meuse, and raced across before the German outpost had a chance to blow the bridges. Further north, CCA of the US 7th Armored Division had captured a bridge intact at Verdun. Within a few hours, these bridgeheads had been consolidated, more crossing sites over the Meuse were in American hands, and additional bridges were under construction. However, the Third Army soon came to a standstill.

As a result of Eisenhower's decision to make the main Allied effort in the north, the amount of fuel received daily by the Third Army had fallen well short of consumption and the army had run dry. Between August 26 and September 2, the army received a daily average of only about 200,000 gallons of petrol when in recent weeks it had consumed more than double that per day. The lowest ebb was reached on September 2, when it received only 25,390 gallons. However, the situation soon started to improve, 240,000 gallons arriving on September 4 and nearly 1.4 million gallons being delivered during the next three days.

The logistical situation having improved, on September 13, SHAEF issued a directive

which restated that the 21st Army Group and the First Army operating on the left were to have 'priority in all forms of logistical support', while on the right, the Third Army was to advance only 'to hold adequate bridgeheads beyond the Moselle and thus prevent the enemy from reinforcing further north by tearing troops away from the Metz area'. Once bridgeheads across the Rhine had been gained in the north, the Third Army would receive permission to advance through the Saar. It was, however, noted that if 'at an earlier date, maintenance of the Third Army becomes possible, this advance will be initiated at that time'.

This last sentence gave Patton the opportunity to push beyond the simple gain of bridgeheads across the Moselle and he lost no time in devising an ambitious operation that would put his army not only across the Moselle, but on the far bank of the Rhine. On September 14, his plans were approved by the 12th Army Group and, two days later, Patton assigned objectives to his commanders. The XII Corps was to establish a bridgehead across the Rhine south of Mainz and take Darmstadt while on its left the XX Corps was to do the same at Frankfurt; meanwhile, the XV Corps was to echelon on the right flank, ready to push in the direction of Mannheim.



Having crossed the Moselle, XV Corps advanced towards the Meurthe river, the assault being opened by the 134th Infantry against Gerbéviller (ten kilometres south of Lunéville), where the bridge over the River Mortagne led to a good road running



north-eastwards. Left: These GIs were pictured near the railway station — a scene little changed in nearly 50 years (right) with a sign on the wall still indicating the direction to the First World War cemetery. (NA)



to be the most ambitious German counter-thrust in the West so far, not to be surpassed until the Ardennes offensive was launched in December.

At this stage of the war, Hitler in his headquarters in East Prussia was living in a world of fantasy sustained by self-delusion, and, like most of the orders issued by him around this time, his 'stand and hold' orders of September 3 showed a complete disregard for the immense difficulties confronting the German troops and commanders in the West and a lack of appreciation for the warnings to OKW by the field commanders during the last weeks of August. The retreating troops lacked heavy weapons, panzer divisions were left with only five to ten tanks in working order, and the morale of the troops was poor in the face of the Allied superiority in tanks and aircraft.

On paper, there may well have been the appearance of a general parity between the Allied armies and the German forces, (the Allies' 38 divisions in northern France on September 1 being opposed by about 40 German divisions), but not a single German

THE GERMAN PLAN

The months of June, July and August had brought one defeat after another for German forces in the East and in the West. Within these three months, the Wehrmacht had lost more than 900,000 men, killed, wounded or missing in the East, and nearly 300,000 in the West. In July, the number of tanks and assault guns destroyed on all fronts amounted to about 2,000 but only about 1,200 replacements were delivered by the factories. About the same figures applied for August. During the early summer, Hitler and his advisers had showed much more concern over the collapse of Heeresgruppe Mitte on the Eastern Front and the threat to East Prussia than with the invasion in Normandy, but the rapid disintegration of the Western Front in August forced them to focus their attention westwards.

Hitler and the OKW placed much confidence in the Westwall, regarding these defences as a potentially impenetrable barrier. However, the Westwall needed to be renovated, having fallen into disrepair since the victory in the West in 1940. Most of the armament, much of the communication equipment and many of the minefields had been removed to build the Atlantic Wall, and at least six weeks was estimated as being necessary to prepare the Westwall for battle. With Hitler's priority, men and material were rushed in and by September 10, about 200,000 workers were engaged in the re-equipment of the long-disused fortifications.

It was vital to buy a breathing space and on September 3, Hitler issued a new directive for the conduct of the war in the West. Insisting that it was 'important to gain as much time as possible for raising and bringing up new formations, and for the development of the Western defence', he ordered OB West to 'dispute every inch of ground with the enemy by stubborn delaying action'. In the same directive, Hitler ordered that an armoured force be assembled forward of the Vosges, its main task being 'to deliver a concentrated attack against the deep eastern flank and rear positions of the Americans'. Hitler personally selected the formations to carry out his grandiose plan. The attack force was to be composed of three panzer-grenadier divisions (3. and 15. Panzer-grenadier and 17. SS Divisions), three of the brand new panzer brigades (Panzerbrigades 106, 107 and 108) and two panzer divisions (11. and 21. Panzer-Divisions). In addition, beginning on September 5, three more panzer brigades (111, 112 and 113) were to be brought in from Germany. Hitler also ordered that the 5. Panzerarmee staff be moved south to lead the operation, being relieved in Belgium by the 7. Armee. It was



While fresh German forces were being brought forward to counter-attack the deep eastern 'flank' of the Third Army, every measure was taken to comply with Hitler's order to 'dispute every inch of the ground with the enemy by stubborn delaying action'. Above: In Epinal, this 75mm anti-tank gun was positioned on the Place des Vosges to cover the bridge over the Moselle while machine-gunnery (top) were positioned in windows overlooking the square. Below: Since the war, the bridge has been renamed the 'Pont du 170ème R.I.' in honour of the sacrifice of the French infantry regiment which defended it in 1940. (ECPA)





division was at its normal strength, many having suffered severe losses during the summer battles. As a consequence, the ratio of effectiveness was about 2 to 1 in favour of the Allies. The Allied superiority was overwhelming in armour, reaching about 20 to 1, while that of guns was about 2.5 to 1. In the air, the superiority was even more total, the German armies on the Western Front being supported by less than 600 aircraft of all types from Luftflotte 3, while facing three Allied tactical air forces with more than 2,000 aircraft.

Since July 1944, Generalfeldmarschall Walter Model had held a dual command, OB West and Heeresgruppe B, but this situation was changed on September 5 when Generalfeldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt was reinstated as OB West. Model, who had supported the counter-attack proposal from the start, retained his position as commander of Heeresgruppe B. Meeting von Rundstedt before the latter left for his new command, Hitler expressed his confidence in the situation in the West. The Allies were, he said, outrunning their supplies and the front would be stabilised when their armoured spearheads were cut off by counter-attacks.

On September 7, von Rundstedt sent his first estimate of the situation in the West to OKW from his HQ at Arenberg near Koblenz. He pointed out that the Allies were concentrating in front of Aachen in the section of the Westwall covering the approach to the Ruhr and that reinforcements of at least five to ten infantry divisions with assault gun battalions and anti-tank weapons were needed at once. He also insisted on the need for aerial support.

Hitler just could not accept these facts and reiterated that the front must be held and that a counter-attack must be launched as scheduled against the southern flank of the Third US Army by Heeresgruppe G.

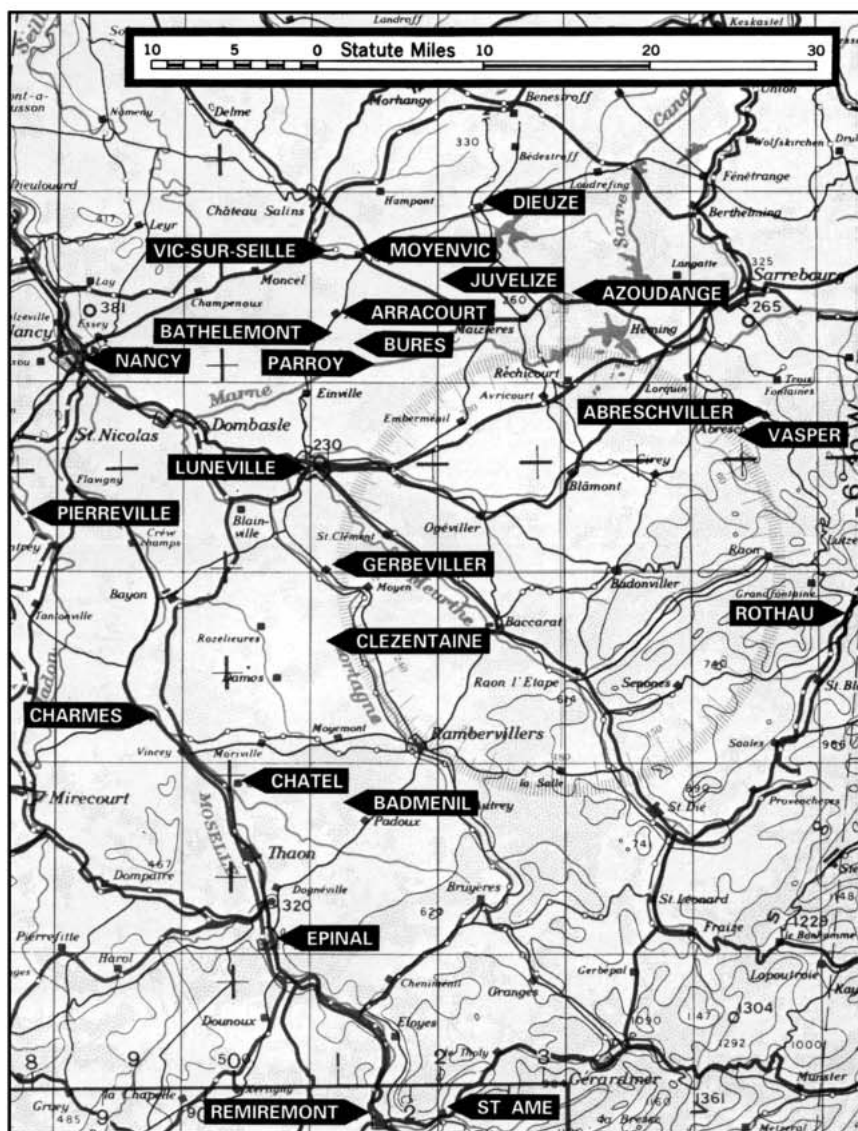
On September 7, Heeresgruppe G reported on the state of preparation of the assault group. Because of the situation in the 1. Armee sector (the American XX Corps had begun crossing the Moselle south of Metz on September 6), the 3. Panzergrenadier-Division and the 17. SS-Panzergrenadier-Division could not be made available for the time being. Panzerbrigade 106 was also closely engaged with the 1. Armee and it was not known when it might be available. The 21. Panzer-Division had succeeded in putting together a Kampfgruppe near Charmes, north of Epinal, but the rest of the division was still on its way. The 11. Panzer-Division was still engaged covering the southern wing of the 19. Armee and it was impossible to refit it under such conditions.

Prospects seemed better with the other formations for Panzerbrigades 111 and 112 were on their way to Epinal and Panzerbrigade 113 was announced arriving at Belfort. Panzerbrigades 107 and 108 would not however be available before September 15.

On September 10, the staff of 5. Panzerarmee arrived from Belgium to take command of the counter-offensive, joined the next morning by its commander, General von Manteuffel. **Left:** Here he briefs a squad from his new army in a typical French village scene. (ECPA) **Right:** As with all the other German pictures which appear in this feature, there were no captions as to time or place, but Jean Paul's diligent research came up trumps. He centred his initial enquiries on Vasperville, where 5. Panzerarmee had established its headquarters, and by slowly widening the search area, traced the spot to Abreschviller, five kilometres by road to the east.

The 5. Panzerarmee staff chosen by Hitler to command the coming counter-offensive arrived in Strasbourg from Belgium on September 10 and the new army commander, General Hasso von Manteuffel, joined his new staff there the following day, bringing

with him his own chief-of-staff, Oberst Wolf von Kahlden. Hitler had personally selected von Manteuffel, the commander of the elite Panzer-Division 'Grossdeutschland' (in the East until early September), to command the 5. Panzerarmee.





Ten new panzer brigades (numbered 101–110) were created in July 1944, and a further three (111–113) at the beginning of September. Hitler planned to use the new units as mobile reserves and he decreed that they were to be issued with new Panthers straight off the assembly line. On paper, the first ten brigades were supposed to have a strength of 33 Panthers and 11 Panzerjäger IVs, while Panzerbrigades 111, 112 and 113 would have 45 Panthers and a similar number of PzKpfw IVs. In the event, the latter three brigades only received about 60 per cent of their nominal PzKpfw IV strength and 90 per cent of their Panthers. In each case, the Panther battalion came from an experienced unit, Panzerbrigade 111 being given the I. Abteilung of Panzer-Regiment 16; Panzerbrigade 112 receiving the one from Panzer-Regiment 29 (12. Panzer-Division), and Panzerbrigade 113 that from Panzer-Regiment 130 of the Panzer-Lehr. On September 5, the I. Abteilung of Panzerbrigade 111 left the training centre of Grafenwöhr on six railway trains en route for Lorraine. Five days later, the first two had reached Epinal and had been unloaded while the last train, comprising

about 20 heavily-camouflaged carriages with three Panthers on flat-cars, was still crawling at a snail's pace southwards along the Bruche river valley some 80 kilometres from Epinal. On board was the battalion's staff company commanded by Oberleutnant Walter Schubert. It was around 9 a.m. on September 12, as the train neared Rothau (*left*), that two fighter-bombers suddenly appeared. With the train loaded with fuel and ammunition, the tank crews lost no time in taking shelter in cuttings on the embankment (*right*). For ten minutes, the train was subjected to repeated strafing attacks but, as soon as the aircraft departed, Oberleutnant Schubert ordered the undamaged carriages to be uncoupled from the wrecked steam engine and rolled back down the line and into a tunnel situated some distance away. However, when two of the flat-cars carrying the tanks were pushed down the track, the crews discovered that the brakes were faulty and, gathering momentum, they crashed into the back of the third flat-car, dislodging all three Panthers which tumbled down the embankment.

Though three new panzer brigades were now reaching the area, the strength and capability of the forces assembling under 5. Panzerarmee were still quite insufficient for its task. Only parts of the 15. Panzer-grenadier-Division had been able to move south from the Metz area before the American armour had cut the roads east of the Moselle. The 21. Panzer-Division was still assembling and reorganising north of Epinal. On September 7, Panzerbrigade 106 had been committed in a spoiling attack on the left flank of Third Army and come out badly beaten and with few tanks left. The 11. Panzer-Division was still licking its wounds in the Belfort area after the costly rearguard operations it had fought to cover the withdrawal of the 19. Armee and was thus unavailable for the first phase of the coming operation. It then became clear that two of the promised panzer brigades, 107 and 108, would also never reach the Belfort area as the situation in the Aachen sector and the Netherlands had deteriorated to such an extent that they were sent instead to the 1. Fallschirmarmee and 7. Armee respectively.

Panzerbrigade 112 had now reached the Epinal sector and was forming up, while Panzerbrigade 111, which had also detrained at Epinal, was assembling near Remiremont. Panzerbrigade 113 had been diverted from Belfort and sent instead to Sarrebourg where it detrained on September 12, still minus part of its armour, and reorganised after having been scattered by air attacks. On September 13, von Rundstedt reported to OKW on the sorry state of the hastily-assembled units: the brigade staffs had no command tank; the brigades did not have any recovery vehicles to deal with damaged panzers; the grenadier regiment of Panzerbrigade 111 was partly equipped with wood-gas and coal-gas trucks; that of Panzerbrigade 112 had not got any optical equipment; Panzerbrigade 113 had lost fifty per cent of its trucks during the approach march, and so on.

The day before, Panzerbrigade 112 had been engaged west of the Moselle in another attempt to stop the advance of the XV Corps. It debouched from Epinal in two columns: on the right the Panther battalion and infantry advanced westwards, while on



There had been no injuries among the crews, who continued their journey by road for the Panzerbrigade 111 assembly area near Remiremont. The brigade's I. Abteilung was quartered in Saint-Amé, a little village just to the east. Fifty years later, Jean Paul traced Walter Schubert who was able to describe their staff HQ with such precision that he had no difficulty in finding the château near the 'Saut de la Cuve', a waterfall on the Cleurie river. A miniature park has been created in the garden.



Left: On the morning of September 16, the leading elements of Panzerbrigade 111 advanced through Badmémil on their way to attack French spearheads which had crossed the Moselle at



Châtel-sur-Moselle some ten kilometres to the west. (BA)
Right: Jean Paul found that the picture had been taken in the centre of the village right in front of the town hall.



Another seemingly impossible achievement! After having identified this officer as Major Gerhard Tebbe, the commander of I. Abteilung of Panzer-Regiment 16 (and received confirmation of this from veterans of the 116. Panzer-Division), Jean Paul was rewarded with the pleasure of leading a tour of the Lorraine battlefields with Major Tebbe and two other former officers of the battalion. (BA)

the left the PzKpfw IV battalion advanced southwards in a flanking movement. The right column encountered a combat command of the French 2ème Division Blindée at Dompaire and the fight turned into such a débâcle on September 13 that the brigade lost nearly all of its Panthers. Thus, in an attempt to halt the Third Army advance, two of the panzer brigades — 106 and 112 — had lost much of their strength before the real offensive had even begun.

From September 14, Panzerbrigade 111 moved and assembled near Rambervillers from where it soon reported having already lost a dozen panzers to air attacks and

Right: Major Tebbe, now 83 years old, was traced, and he agreed to return to Badmémil with Jean Paul, as did his former adjutant, Oberleutnant Horst Gittermann, and the former commander of the battalion staff company, Oberleutnant Walter Schubert. The crowning glory of the visit was when Jean Paul identified the same roof, still standing on a house in the main street looking exactly as it had done when Major Tebbe last saw it 48 years previously.



mechanical breakdowns. In the afternoon of September 16, together with elements of the 21. Panzer-Division, the brigade attacked the French spearheads which had crossed the Moselle at Châtel-sur-Moselle. The French reacted swiftly, reinforcements were committed and the German attack was beaten off. However, in order to avoid a large-scale engagement east of the Moselle when his orders called him to protect the flank of the Third Army west of the river, Général Leclerc ordered his men back across it.

The tactical situation having changed drastically, the ambitious plan for a German counter-attack in the direction of Nancy was now out of the question. On September 14, the commander of Heeresgruppe G, Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, had proposed an alternative operation on a smaller scale in the Lunéville sector with a drive toward Château-Salins to cut off those American armoured units moving east. OB West referred Blaskowitz' proposition to OKW which soon gave its approval. Von Rundstedt issued new orders on September 16 which stressed that the attack must begin not later than the 18th. The 5. Panzerarmee was to wipe out the American forces in the Lunéville area, then turn northward to destroy their bridgeheads across the Moselle and restore the river line up to Metz. Although von Manteuffel protested that his army was not strong enough to carry out such an ambitious scheme, he received no answer other than a confirmation of the order to attack not later than September 18.



FIRST CLASHES AT LUNÉVILLE, SEPTEMBER 18

Trying to comply with his orders, von Manteuffel had devised plans to attack in the early hours of September 18 with what forces were then to hand. On the right wing, the LVIII. Panzerkorps of General der Panzertruppen Walter Krüger was assigned Panzerbrigade 113, which had reached Blâmont, and those troops of the 15. Panzergrenadier-Division which had been able to reach the area of the Forêt de Parroy. Over on the left wing, the XXXXVII. Panzerkorps of Generalleutnant Heinrich von Lüttwitz was given Panzerbrigade 111 and the 21. Panzer-Division.

Meanwhile, Third Army had completed its preparations, and on September 17, the XII Corps was alerted for an advance northward in the direction of the Saar, with the 4th Armored Division in the lead. Early next morning, the divisional commander, Major General John S. Wood, issued his orders for the advance on the 19th: CCB was to move on Sarrebrücken and CCA towards Sarreguemines. That evening, the 4th Armored Division was deployed east of Nancy with its

Early on September 18, Panzerbrigade 111 attacked in the direction of Lunéville. About 10.30 a.m., the leading elements hit the outposts of the 42nd Cavalry Squadron at Moncel, just on the eastern exit of Lunéville. The attack broke through and in the afternoon the Germans entered the town, forcing the cavalry back into the northern extremities. Relishing their victory, these grenadiers inspect captured American vehicles. The man standing in front of the M8 armoured car named *Sweet Sue*, with a folded map under his arm, is Oberleutnant Gittermann. Note the '3A 42C' marking standing for 'Third Army, 42nd Cavalry Squadron'. (BA)

CCR in Lunéville, CCA near Arracourt, about twenty kilometres north of Lunéville, and CCB west of Châneau-Salins, about twenty kilometres further to the north.

In Lunéville itself, the situation was somewhat confused. On September 15, two troops of the 2nd Cavalry Group had tried to enter the town but had been turned back by elements of the 15. Panzergrenadier-Division which had advanced from the Forêt de Parroy in the north-east. The town was captured the next day, when the 42nd Cavalry Squadron attacked from the south as CCR of the 4th Armored Division advanced from the north-west. The Germans withdrew to the protection of the Forêt de Parroy although strong patrols soon filtered back into the town.

Early on September 18, the XXXXVII. Panzerkorps launched its attack north towards Lunéville. On the right, Panzerbrigade 111 sent those of its forces not yet committed against the French on the Moselle. At first light, the force, comprising 17 Panthers and the brigade's grenadier battalion, advanced from the Baccarat area in two columns, the left one moving along the main Baccarat-Lunéville road in the Meurthe river valley, and the right-hand one to the north of the Mondon forest. By 10 a.m., the leading elements of the left-hand Kampfgruppe had reached Chenevières while those on the right had arrived at Hablainville. On the left flank, a Kampfgruppe of the 21. Panzer-Division had reached Moyon in the Mortagne valley.



Then and later. An interesting pair of pictures by opposing photographers: *left* German and *right* American, both featuring a Panzer IV and both taken in the Lunéville area. Each side is



described as using the equipment of the other, the Germans a captured Jeep and the '106th Cavalry a captured German gun and ammunition on the Nazis'. (BA & NA)



The American caption to this picture, dated September 22, states it was taken in 'Frambois', a miss-spelling for Fraimbois, ten kilometres south-east of Lunéville.

Half an hour later, the leading elements hit the outposts of the 42nd Cavalry Squadron near Moncel, south-east of Lunéville. Six 75mm assault guns from Troop E were rushed forward to stop the Panthers but their shells merely bounced off their front armour and three of the guns were destroyed in as many minutes. The cavalymen fought the infantry which followed the panzers and succeeded in holding up the German advance until about 11 a.m. when they were forced to pull back. The Germans pressed their attack, entered Lunéville in the afternoon and forced CCR and the cavalry back into the northern part of the town.

North of the Vezouze river, Panzerbrigade 113 had attacked westwards in the afternoon and made contact with the 15. Panzer-grenadier-Division at the edge of the Parroy forest. By 5 p.m. the vanguard of the brigade's Kampfgruppe Brose reached Marainviller, about eight kilometres east of Lunéville.

To counter the German threat, XII Corps immediately rushed southwards CCB of the 6th Armored Division which was then east of Nancy with the 35th Infantry Division. Meanwhile, the 4th Armored Division had ordered its CCA, which was then across the canal to the north, to send a task force southward to Lunéville. The first reinforcements arrived at about 6 p.m. and, with a strong and destructive artillery fire hammering their positions, the Germans withdrew behind the railway line in the southern part of the town.

Meanwhile, OB West had sent additional orders to the 5. Panzerarmee. The main direction of the attack was to be shifted westward, Nancy being now the objective instead of Château-Salins. Accordingly, General von Manteuffel reorganised his forces during the night, the XXXXVII. Panzerkorps now being instructed to defend the army's left flank (from the Marne-Rhine Canal north of Lunéville thence along the Meurthe river), while, north of the canal, the LVIII. Panzerkorps was to attack westward in the direction of Nancy with Panzerbrigades 111 and 113. The two brigades were ordered to disengage from the Lunéville sector and move north. They had to cross the Marne-Rhine Canal during the night, the former at Moucourt and Parroy, the latter further east between Lagarde and Moussey. The leaders of Panzerbrigade 113 soon reached Bourdonnay, but Panzerbrigade 111 was not to start from the Chenevières area until early on September 19.

SEPTEMBER 19

That night, Panzerbrigade 113, with its Panzergrenadier-Regiment 2113 and about 40 panzers in the lead, continued northwards from Bourdonnay in order to reach their jump-off area. CCA outposts near Lezey reported the sound of tracked vehicles moving in the darkness and American artillery opened up on the sector.

Early on the morning of September 19, Panzerbrigade 113 started its push westward through the thick morning fog. Captain William A. Dwight, a liaison officer from the 4th Armored Division, met one of the columns near Bezange-la-Petite, but managed to escape unnoticed in the fog. He radioed an alarm to Lieutenant Colonel Creighton W. Abrams, commanding CCA's 37th Tank Battalion, in Lezey while he himself rushed to Arracourt. There, Dwight was ordered to take a platoon from the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion to Lezey. On the way, the four tank destroyers came across panzers just west of Bezange-la-Petite. In the short fight that followed at close range in the fog, three of the TDs were lost, but not before they had destroyed seven of the enemy tanks.

Meanwhile, at Lezey, some Panthers had loomed out of the fog, less than a hundred yards in front of a section of Shermans of C Company of the 37th Tank Battalion, which were in an outpost just south of the village. Before the surprised Germans could react, the leading Panther and the two that were following were disabled, and the column hastily turned back southward.

Led by Captain Richard Lamison, four tanks from C Company then raced southward and took position on a commanding ridge near Bezange-la-Petite. Eight Panthers soon appeared and Lamison's force succeeded in knocking out four of them before they could return fire. The Americans then withdrew behind the crest of the ridge, moved some distance to the south and reappeared to attack the remaining panzers.

As the tanks which had been sent to Lunéville by CCA the previous afternoon had by now returned, a combined force of medium tanks from A and B Companies, 37th Tank Battalion, was organised under Major William L. Hunter. The force rolled on to Réchicourt where they caught another Kampfgruppe in the flank and reported having destroyed nine Panthers for the loss of three of their own tanks. In the evening, the battalion turned its attention to mopping up the infantry positions west of Moncourt before reassembling near Lezey.

Earlier that day, General Patton had arrived in Arracourt from his headquarters in Etain and met with Major General Wood. They both agreed that with more than forty tanks reported destroyed by CCA, there was no reason to worry further about the German threat in the sector and they decided that CCA should begin the planned move northward towards Sarreguemines the next morning.

Panzerbrigade 111 did not play any part in the day's fights. Having allegedly been deliberately misdirected on its way by a French farmer, it did not make contact with LVIII. Panzerkorps until late in the afternoon.

Heeresgruppe G was far from satisfied by the events and the small gains of the 19th, all the more so because, over on the left flank, 5. Panzerarmee's defence line had been broken by the XV Corps and been pulled back during the night to the Meurthe river. Pointing out the heavy losses suffered by Panzerbrigade 113 — more than thirty panzers according to his knowledge — von Manteuffel tried to convince Blaskowitz that it was wiser to abort the whole operation, but he was ordered to press on regardless with the attack next morning.



The photo was actually taken on the corner of Rue de Sarrebourg and Rue Carnot in Lunéville itself, where a general combat situation existed on the 22nd. The M18 is actually firing in the direction of Fraimbois. (NA)



Left: A staff conference on the afternoon of September 20 near Parroy. In the centre, General Walter Krüger, commanding LVIII. Panzerkorps; on the left, Oberst Heinrich Bronsart von Schellendorff, commanding Panzerbrigade 111, while on the right stands an unidentified Hauptmann, the commander of Panzer-Abteilung 2111, the brigade's PzKpfw IV battalion. The officer standing in the background may be Major i. G. Beck of Krüger's staff. Oberst von Bronsart, who had arrived in haste only a few days earlier from Smolensk on the Eastern Front to



take command of the brigade, is looking at the map of a sector quite unfamiliar to him. A copy of Michelin Sheet 62 can be seen in General Krüger's pocket, the same map that a present-day visitor would use when visiting the Lorraine battlefield. (BA) **Right:** This young Oberfeldwebel was the driver of the Panzer IV which was the mount of the commander of Panzer-Abteilung 2111. The crude 'vB' marking, which was painted on several of the vehicles of the brigade, possibly stood for 'von Bronsart'. (ECPA)

SEPTEMBER 20

With LVIII. Panzerkorps reporting that Panzerbrigade 111 had only 19 Panthers and 6 PzKpfw IVs combat-ready and Panzerbrigade 113 only 10 Panthers and 3 PzKpfw IVs, von Manteuffel knew that his force was too weak and disorganised to be able to maintain the attack. He therefore ordered General Krüger to reorganise his corps along a line between Bures and Donnelay, with Panzerbrigade 111 shifting its forces north-eastward to assemble near Blanche-Eglise. However, to make pretence of complying with his orders, he instructed a Kampfgruppe of Panzerbrigade 111 to advance in the Bures sector.

On the morning of September 20, CCA had begun to move out to the north-east as planned, leaving one company of the 35th Tank Battalion near Arracourt to cover the concentration of the units which were to take over the area. At about 11.30 a.m., the head of the left-hand column had reached Hampont, five kilometres east of Château-Salins, and that on the right was at Dieuze, fifteen kilometres to the east, when General Wood radioed that enemy tanks had returned to the attack near Arracourt. Panzerbrigade 111 had sent eight Panthers westward out of Bures. They advanced toward the positions where the 191st Field Artillery Battalion had just started to limber up its guns to join the divisional columns marching north. Firing HE shells at a 1,000-yards' range, the 155mm howitzers easily matched the threat. When those tanks of 35th Tank Battalion left as rearguards appeared, the panzers withdrew towards Bures.

Ordered to move north to join LVIII. Panzerkorps on the Marne-Rhine Canal, Panzerbrigade 111 had difficulty in disengaging its various elements from the battle at Châtel-sur-Moselle and Lunéville. It moved north slowly and did not start to cross the canal and make contact with LVIII. Panzerkorps before the late afternoon of September 19. This SdKfz 251 armoured personnel carrier of the recce platoon of the brigade staff has just crossed the canal and is driving towards Parroy on the D2 on the afternoon of September 20. (BA)





This M8 is most probably one of those recently captured near Lunéville (see page 36) and was possibly also on the strength of the reconnaissance platoon. Crosses have been hastily applied using white paint only. (BA)

The commander of CCA, Colonel Bruce C. Clarke, now decided to turn his whole combat command and clear this entire area 'once and for all'. A strong force comprising three companies of the 37th Tank Battalion and two companies of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion, was assembled near Lezey under Lieutenant Colonel Abrams, while another force was assembled under Major C. L. Kimsey to clear up the area along the canal in the Bures area. Meanwhile, the artillery brought to bear supporting fire.

That afternoon, while its last armoured elements were leaving Bures on their move toward Blanche-Eglise, Panzerbrigade 111 sent another armoured patrol in the direction of Bathelémont. The Germans came across Major Kimsey's task force and, in a brisk fight, five Panthers were disabled. Major Kimsey then tried to take Bures, but his force was firmly turned back by the Panthers which outranged the Shermans and he decided to give up the attack.

Starting from Lezey at about 3 p.m., the main task force under Abrams had moved through Ley and turned southward. On the right, C Company came under fire from a Kampfgruppe of Panzerbrigade 111 which had taken positions on Hill 241 (just west of Ommeray) to cover the flank of the brigade moving northward through the village. C Company lost a handful of tanks before withdrawing behind the Mannecourt crest to wait for B Company and the two companies then engaged in a brief tank duel with the PzKpfw IVs. The CCA Operations Journal recorded that the '37th lost 12 tanks and knocked out 8 enemy tanks'. With darkness approaching, Lieutenant Colonel Abrams turned aside and completed the operation by taking Moncourt during the night. (He was later awarded the DSC for bravery in the fighting of September 20.)

As all this was going on, the 4th Armored Division had kept on advancing northward as planned, its CCA (minus Abrams' tank

force) now pushing beyond Dieuze and CCB beyond Château-Salins. This advance was opening a dangerous gap between the 1. Armee and the 5. Panzerarmee and in the evening OB West ordered Heeresgruppe G to close this gap. Blaskowitz instructed the 1. Armee to gather its forces for an attack southward from the Delme area and ordered the 5. Panzerarmee to reinforce its right wing and attack northward to meet the thrust of the 1. Armee near Moyenvic. Dissatisfied with the day's showing, Blaskowitz urged von Manteuffel to press on and to commit

the 11. Panzer-Division to back up his tired panzer brigades. That evening, the war diary of Heeresgruppe G noted that 'the 5. Panzerarmee shows a marked tendency to limit itself to defensive action'.

However, Blaskowitz's days as commander of Heeresgruppe G were numbered, for the failure to achieve a decisive breakthrough with the 5. Panzerarmee had convinced Hitler that it was time to replace him. On September 21, Blaskowitz was removed and General der Panzertruppen Hermann Balck took his place.



It also had just crossed the canal and entered Parroy. The village was totally destroyed during the First World War and reconstructed during the 1920s to the same general style. It was not easy to pinpoint the correct house but, after comparing the windows of dozens of buildings in the area and having roused the interest of locals, patience paid off. This is Rue du Sânon.



Disappointed by the failure of Heeresgruppe G to achieve a decisive breakthrough, Hitler dismissed its commander, Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz, on September 21 and named General Hermann Balck (*above left*) his replacement. In the afternoon, Balck appeared at the 5. Panzerarmee headquarters at Vasperviller to discuss the situation with General von Manteuffel. It was agreed that Panzerbrigade 111 would attack next morning to take Juvelize. It was still dark when

Major Tebbe and his staff moved down from their billets in a castle overlooking Mulcey to the assembly area near Blanche-Eglise early next morning. Not having slept for six days, all officers and men were very tired. Thick fog covered the whole area and the brigade had considerable difficulty in assembling. Riding in his Panther, Major Tebbe reached the brigade command post which had been established in a café (*above right*) in Blanche-Eglise around eight o'clock. (BA)

SEPTEMBER 21

On September 20, Patton had shifted the boundary between XII Corps and XV Corps north to the Marne-Rhine Canal and the latter corps was now in charge of the Lunéville sector. Planning to outflank the German defences along the Meurthe south of Lunéville, the XV Corps pressed on the town on September 21.

The 313th Infantry of the 79th Infantry Division took the village of Moncel, just east of Lunéville, but its advance was halted when it reached the main German defence line — a line of foxholes and trenches dug in the woods at the edge of the Forêt de Mondon. To the south, the 3rd Battalion of the 314th Infantry succeeded in crossing the Meurthe river near Saint-Clément but it was also stopped in front of the forest and, with night-fall, had to fall back across the river. CCA made another sweep and General Woods ordered his 4th Armored to take a rest the next day.

At 3 p.m. that day, General Balck and his chief-of-staff appeared at the 5. Panzerarmee headquarters at Vasperviller to discuss the attack next morning to join with the 1. Armee. Von Manteuffel explained that he had to wait for the arrival of the 11. Panzer-Division, but it was agreed that Panzerbrigade 111 would attack early the next morning from the Guéblange area and take the high ground west of Juvelize.



He left the tank to report to Oberst von Bronsart (*right*) and shortly afterwards General von Manteuffel (*centre*) arrived, and immediately started blaming them for not having attacked in time. Walter Schubert, who remained in the Panther during the argument, remembers how von Manteuffel rebuked von Bronsart harshly, the latter simply responding meekly: 'Jawohl, Herr General'. The attack finally started around 9.45 a.m. south-westwards in the direction of Juvelize. (BA)



Panthers of Panzerbrigade 111 move up to Blanche-Eglise to prepare for the attack on Juvelize. (BA)



The fog was slowly lifting when the leading panzers fell on the 25th Cavalry Squadron in front of Juvelize. The American vehicles were no match for the panzers and seven light tanks were soon destroyed. *Above:* This picture, taken by a German photographer on September 23, shows an M4 Sherman, probably of the 37th Tank Battalion, destroyed later that same day. *Below:* Jean Paul discovered that it showed a field just north of the D22A, midway between Blanche-Eglise and Juvelize. On the extreme left of the picture, the white building in the background is the castle overlooking Mulcey where Panzerbrigade 111 had its billets. The Germans pressed home their attack but, as the sun broke through, Thunderbolts appeared overhead which started bombing and strafing. The Germans pushed on

regardless, and by midday Juvelize and the high ground north of the village were in their hands. However, the Americans reacted swiftly and, emerging from Lezey, a strong task force from CCA soon reached the hill at Trois-Croix and deployed along the ridge overlooking the valley in which the Germans were advancing and began firing down on the German force trapped in the field below. Major Tebbe, whose Panther was behind and to the left of the armoured personnel carrier in which the brigade commander, Oberst von Bronsart, was riding, saw the SPW stop and von Bronsart climb down and then start walking in the direction of the enemy. He came under automatic fire, was hit and fell. Four days later his body was found, lying in a ditch together with a young soldier.

SEPTEMBER 22

September 22 dawned foggy, a situation which favoured the Germans for the poor visibility hid the advancing columns of Panzerbrigade 111 from Allied fighter-bombers. During the night, patrols had laid white marking tape up to the American lines so that the attacking forces could approach swiftly. However, part of the advantage was lost when the attack started about three hours late, allegedly because of the delayed arrival of a grenadier battalion sent by the 11. Panzer-Division. Also, because of the fog, the brigade had considerable difficulty in assembling and, with visibility less than ten metres, the panzers became separated, some lost direction while others turned around, causing a lot of noise and confusion.

The attack finally started around 9.45 a.m. from the sector of Blanche-Eglise, south-westwards in the direction of Juvelize. The fog was slowly lifting when the leaders fell on the 25th Cavalry Squadron which was holding positions in front of the village. The lightly-armoured American vehicles were no match for the panzers and seven light tanks were destroyed. However, C Company of the 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion, in position behind the cavalry line, entered the fray and succeeded in destroying three of the panzers.

By then, the sun had broken through and squadrons of P-47 Thunderbolts from the XIX Tactical Air Command now appeared in the sky, bombing and strafing the German columns. The Germans pushed on regardless and, by midday, Juvelize and the high ground north of the village were reported taken by Panzerbrigade 111, while on its left the attached infantry battalion of the 11. Panzer-Division had reached Donnelay. Further south, elements of Panzerbrigade 113 had taken the cross-roads north of Ley.

CCA reacted swiftly and, coming from Lezey, Abrams led A and C Companies of the 37th Tank Battalion and A Company of the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion in a counter-attack to retake Juvelize. The task force circled to the north and at about 2.30 p.m. reached the hill at Trois Croix overlooking the valley east of Juvelize.

At ranges from 400 to 2,000 yards, the tanks fired down at the German column trapped in the fields down below, helped by artillery firing from further afield. The German spearhead suffered high losses, with



14 panzers and armoured vehicles destroyed and the brigade commander, Oberst Heinrich Bronsart von Schellendorff, being

mortally wounded. At about 6 p.m. Panzerbrigade 111 was ordered to fall back on the start line.



During his visit, Jean Paul took the three former officers of Panzer-Regiment 16 to the place where their commander was killed. L-R: Horst Gittermann, former Oberleutnant and adjutant of the I. Abteilung, points out Trois-Croix to Gerhard Tebbe, his commander, and to Walter Schubert, then an Oberleutnant commanding the battalion's staff company. Their feeling was that with von Manteuffel's criticism ringing in his ears, von Bronsart may well have sought death in battle in fine cavalry tradition when faced with the useless squandering of his armoured force.



The Trois-Croix, after which the ridge is named, lies in the left background. Walter Schubert, Gerhard Tebbe and Horst Gittermann point out the spot where their advance was stopped. Withdrawing with his turret facing backwards, Tebbe's Panther was hit repeatedly as they desperately strove to reach the protection of Sorbier wood. Standing in the turret, Gerhard Tebbe remembers seeing one shot coming right at them and he instinctively ducked as the shell smashed into the gun

mantle. After a few agonising minutes, the Panther reached the wood and later they arrived back in Blanche-Eglise. Horst Gittermann remembers von Manteuffel's anger when he saw the panzers returning; he ran to Leutnant Hans Bunzel in his damaged Panther and angrily threatened him with a court-martial for having withdrawn. He shouted until Bunzel opened his jacket and displayed the Ritterkreuz he had been awarded in 1943. Silenced, von Manteuffel replied 'Let's go!'

At 7.30 p.m., the LVIII. Panzerkorps reported the total failure of the attack. Of Panzerbrigade 111, 'only fragments' remained. The brigade commander was reported 'gravely wounded, probably in enemy hands' (Bronsart von Schellendorff's body was not found until four days later) and the commander of the brigade's panzer-grenadier regiment, Oberstleutnant Werner Rodust, missing (he was to return on the afternoon of September 23). The situation was so confused that the corps sent an officer to Guéblange and Blanche-Eglise to see first-hand what the situation was like. The planned continuation of the attack was cancelled, and instead Panzerbrigade 111 was ordered to hold a line between Blanche-Eglise and Guéblange, and a Kampfgruppe of Panzerbrigade 113 was committed near Ley to hold the road to Bourdonnay.

Like Panzerbrigade 113 three days earlier, Panzerbrigade 111 suffered heavy losses on September 22. The following morning, the LVIII. Panzerkorps reported that the brigade had only 7 tanks and 80 men fit for combat. (Many of the disabled panzers were later recovered; yet, when the brigade was effectively disbanded at the end of the month, only 20 Panthers and 10 PzKpfw IVs were available to be turned over to the 11. Panzer-Division.)

Near Lunéville, the 79th Infantry Division had continued its drive to dislodge the 21. Panzer-Division from the Forêt de Mondon, but the Germans held their ground and progress in this sector was slow and costly. On September 22, a small Kampfgruppe, comprising three panzers and a party of infantry, had even counter-attacked near Moncel and had reached the suburbs of Lunéville, while from the Forêt de Parroy the 15. Panzergrenadier-Division had sent another Kampfgruppe into the north-east quarter of the town.

Centre: At around 6 p.m., the brigade was ordered to pull back and HQ was set up in this wood 1½ kilometres east of Blanche-Eglise. Tebbe and Gittermann on the right check their map — just as they did in this flashback right taken 48 years previously. Schubert stands in for Oberstleutnant Werner Rodust, the commander of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 2111 missing during the battle, who is being addressed by von Manteuffel just before the attack.



SEPTEMBER 23

On September 23, the 79th Division at last succeeded in clearing the Mondon Forest after a series of hand-to-hand engagements. In the south, the vanguard of the French 2ème Division Blindée had crossed the Meurthe river the previous night and armoured patrols sent through the Forêt de Mondon reached the Vezouze river near Bénaménil. One patrol crossed the river and established a bridgehead at Domjevin, but elements of the 15. Panzergrenadier-Division rushed down from the north, re-established the line along the river, forcing the French back across the water.

During the night, the last German rear-guards withdrew behind the Vezouze and, on the morning of the 24th, the XXXXVII. Panzerkorps line ran along the western edge of the Forêt de Parroy, down the Vezouze to Fréménil, then south along a ridge to the boundary with the 19. Armee on the Meurthe.

In the north, the 4th Armored Division had been given another day's respite with cavalry elements patrolling in front of its right flank. The fighter-bombers of XIX Tactical Air Command kept on strafing the roads in the German-held areas and attacked targets designated by the 4th Armored Division. At Lagarde, the commander of Panzerbrigade 113, Oberst Erich von Seckendorff, was hit and killed by a Thunderbolt of the 405th Fighter Group.

After the costly and vain attack of September 22, the 5. Panzerarmee spent September 23 reorganising its battered forces. Hitler's order that all the enemy north of the Marne-Rhine Canal must be destroyed and that the 1. Armee and the 5. Panzerarmee must attack and join up near Moyenvic still stood and Heeresgruppe G put pressure on the 1. Armee to comply. The army commander, General Otto von Knobelsdorff, thereupon sent the 559. Volks-Grenadier-Division south from the Metz area and assembled it on his army's left flank, with what was left of Panzerbrigade 106 in support.

SEPTEMBER 24

On the morning of September 24, backed by tanks of Panzerbrigade 106, two regiments of the 559. Volks-Grenadier-Division attacked the positions held by CCB west of Château-Salins from several directions at once. Shortly after 8.30 a.m., the main thrust started from Château-Salins itself, aiming at CCB's right flank. The co-ordinated attack was a serious threat, but by mid-morning the sky cleared and P-47s came in, bombing and strafing the attacking units. The attack was broken and the grenadiers withdrew, leaving



On the southern flank, the French 2ème Division Blindée had struck against the XXXXVII. Panzerkorps line, and during the night of September 22, its leading elements crossed the Meurthe river. Next morning they established a bridgehead across the River Vezouze, chasing the headquarters of Panzerbrigade 112 out of Domjevin in the process. This M10 tank destroyer of the division's TD battalion, the Régiment Blindée de Fusiliers Marins (RBFM), was pictured in Clémentaine, ten kilometres south of Gerbéviller and still west of the Vezouze river (captured on September 20), covering the northern entry into the village. (ECPA)

ten disabled tanks and half-tracks behind them, with many casualties.

Worried that an Allied breakthrough was imminent on the Aachen front, Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt had urged OKW to abandon the pointless counter-attacks in the Heeresgruppe G sector and move all the available armour to the threatened sector at Aachen. The answer from OKW was merely an order to continue the attack, whereupon von Manteuffel requested two new panzer divisions to replace his battered panzer brigades. However, OB West had no reserves left and the 5. Panzerarmee had to

go with such elements of the 11. Panzer-Division as had arrived.

The 11. Panzer-Division, which had been hastily refitting in the Belfort area was only a shadow of its former self. On September 18, when ordered to move north to join with 5. Panzerarmee, it had had to leave behind a strong Kampfgruppe. More tanks and vehicles were lost as a result of Allied air attacks during the rail trip to Sarrebourg, and, by the time the division reached the 5. Panzerarmee, it had only 16 panzers and two artillery batteries left to support its weak Panzergrenadier-Regiments 110 and 111.



In the same village, the crew of *L'Etourdi 2* (loosely translatable as the 'Scatterbrained 2'), a half-track of the battalion's staff, were pictured having a wash and brush up by the drinking trough in front of the local church. The RBFM originated with volunteers from the French Navy who assembled in



Tunisia as a marine battalion after the scuttling of the French fleet at Toulon in November 1942 (see *After the Battle* No. 76). The battalion formed the core of a tank destroyer unit assembled at the end of 1943 and incorporated in the 2ème Division Blindée in Britain at the beginning of 1944. (ECPA)



Above: Further north, the first few tanks of the 11. Panzer-Division had already reached the Dieuze area although the bulk of the division began arriving on September 23. *Above:* This

picture was taken that evening as a platoon of Panthers moved along the D955 having detrained at Sarrebourg. (ECPA) *Bottom:* The same stretch of road near Azoudange.



Left: The same platoon has reached the centre of Dieuze, then a major concentration area for the forces of 5. Panzerarmee. These are somewhat outdated Ausf. As, a few of which were still serving with the division. On September 25, the remnants of 11. Panzer-Division, together with what was left of Panzer-



brigades 111 and 113, resumed the attack of LVIII. Panzerkorps. (ECPA) *Right:* With no captions to guide him, Jean Paul can be proud of the success of his efforts. The archway in the right background, the Porte de la Saline, once formed the old entrance to the local fortified salt mine.





By September 25, the spearheads of the 5. Panzerarmee had reached Moyenvic and Vic-sur-Seille. This was a part of France incorporated into the German Empire following the Franco-German war of 1870–71, ceded back to France after Germany's

defeat in 1918, and re-annexed by Hitler in 1940. Note the German signboard changing Moyenvic's name to Wich. The Americans recaptured the town at the beginning of November 1944 and it was returned to French ownership in 1945. (NA)

SEPTEMBER 25

These forces nevertheless brought a new impulse to the attack when the LVIII. Panzerkorps jumped off on the morning of September 25. The fate of Panzerbrigade 111 on the 22nd had prompted Manteuffel to seek for surprise by moving the axis of his attack further to the north. On the previous night, scouting parties had reported that Moyenvic was unoccupied and that Marsal was only weakly held. The main attack jumped off at 9 a.m. — two hours late because of the steady downpour. The attackers brushed aside the thin cavalry screen in front of CCA and soon reached Marsal where they reorganised under the cover of a smoke screen. They resumed their advance westward through Moyenvic and by 10 a.m. had reached Vic-sur-Seille, linking up with the 1. Armee.

This success prompted Balck to order the continuation of the attack south-westwards in the direction of Nancy. The 5. Panzerarmee was to commit the armour of the LVIII. Panzerkorps (a few panzers of the 11. Panzer-Division backed by what was left of Panzerbrigades 111 and 113) to reach Bezange-la-Grande and Bauzemont. From there, the armour was to join XXXXVII. Panzerkorps still holding the southern bank of the Marne-Rhine Canal, thus trapping those parts of CCA east of Arracourt.

General von Lüttwitz of XXXXVII. Panzerkorps was warned to hold tight onto his left flank, for a breach of the Vezouze line would endanger the army's flank and ruin the whole of LVIII. Panzerkorps' effort. Von Lüttwitz was also called on to support the other corps' attack by shelling the American guns massed on the hills east of Arracourt, although this part of the order was meaningless for von Lüttwitz was hopelessly short of artillery.

To cover the right flank of the 5. Panzerarmee, the 1. Armee was in the meantime ordered to resume the attack in the Château-Salins sector, with 559. Volks-Grenadier-Division and Panzerbrigade 106 aiming for Moncel-sur-Seille, just west of Bezange-la-Grande.

The LVIII. Panzerkorps attacked as ordered, trying to break through CCA's north flank. Backed by a dozen tanks, the armour hit the 37th Tank Battalion just north of Juvelize, but was easily beaten back by the Shermans on the slopes overlooking the German approaches. In the afternoon and evening, under a steady downpour, other attempts were made to break through the 25th Cavalry Squadron outposts west of Juvelize and the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion lines east of the village. The Americans held their ground although they lost Moncourt in the evening.



On November 8, six weeks after the tank battles with 5. Panzerarmee, an American attack by the 101st and 104th Infantry, 26th Infantry Division, supported by tanks of the 761st Tank Battalion, established bridgeheads across the Seille river at Moyenvic and Vic-sur-Seille respectively. Progress was slow and costly, but the Seille bridges were successfully captured. This picture shows a Sherman of the 761st crossing at Vic-sur-Seille via a newly-constructed Bailey bridge, north towards Morville. (NA)



SEPTEMBER 26

September 26 was spent on reorganisation, both Patton and von Manteuffel shifting their forces southward. During the night, General Wood had already moved his CCB south from the Château-Salins sector and inserted it on the right flank of his CCA between Réchicourt and the Marne-Rhine Canal. Patton wanted him to go on the defensive, so he reorganised his dispositions and withdrew the tip of the CCA salient to a line between Xanrey and Bezange-la-Petite. The units of the LVIII. Panzerkorps were quick to follow up and by midday had occupied Lezey and Coincourt.

Meanwhile, General von Manteuffel had decided to shift the main effort of LVIII. Panzerkorps to its southern wing which lay just north of the canal. A Kampfgruppe had been cobbled together consisting of Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 11, which had just come up from the Belfort area, and about 25 panzers and sturmgeschütz scraped together from what remained of the 11. Panzer-Division, the two panzer brigades, and the 15. Panzergrenadier-Division. Moving from the Bures area, this Kampfgruppe was to capture a hump-back plateau east of Bathelémont (Hill 293 and Hill 318) and take Arracourt just behind. Von Manteuffel was concerned with the American possession of these hills which, when coupled with their overwhelming superiority in artillery, gave them command of the whole sector and effectively barred the 5. Panzerarmee from gaining the road to Nancy.

SEPTEMBER 27

At 8 a.m., LVIII. Panzerkorps launched a series of diversionary attacks against the positions held by CCA and CCB. A strong force attacked positions held by the 10th Armored Infantry Battalion near Bezange-la-Petite and though their assault bent the thin American line of defence, they could not break through. West of the village, a fierce battle was fought for Hill 265. (For gallantry in action this day, Lieutenant James H. Fields was awarded the Medal of Honor.) Over to the west, another group of grenadiers reached Xanrey, but they were caught reorganising in the village by some Sherman tanks which burst in under the cover of smoke and artillery fire. This move put an end to German endeavours in this sector.

Further south, the main LVIII. Panzerkorps attack against the line held by CCB began at about 10 a.m., the panzers advancing westward out of Bures. However, the powerful American artillery opened up and soon halted their attack at la Fourasse, a small cross-roads just west of Bures. After dark, a strong patrol of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 110 marched north and took Hill 318 after a short fire-fight.



From September 26, LVIII. Panzerkorps shifted its main effort to its southern wing along the Marne-Rhine Canal. Backed by tanks scraped together from those left in the two panzer brigades, a battle-group of the 11. Panzer-Division assembled in the Bures area. These four Panthers (Ausf. G) were pictured in the centre of the village preparing to advance westwards along the road to Bathelémont. (BA)



The reader can imagine Jean-Paul's excitement as he walked down this quiet and silent road in Bures. Though the village had been badly damaged by Thunderbolts in 1944, this particular part had escaped unharmed and the passage of a further 50 years had left no lasting mark. Nothing had changed save that the creeper which had just started to cover the house in 1944 had now overtaken the whole building.



Though these pictures may well have been taken on September 27, it seems equally reasonable to assume that they show



the action on the 20th when Panzerbrigade 111 made its first entry into the village. (BA)



SEPTEMBER 28

CCB's 51st Armored Infantry recaptured the hill at first light, but the battle continued throughout the morning, surging back and forth over the crest. In the afternoon, renewed German attacks were broken by the American artillery which hammered the assault groups and the dreaded fighter-bombers then entered the fray, putting an end to the action. That day, XIX Tactical Air Command sent more than 100 fighter-bombers to support the XII Corps. The 23rd Fighter Squadron, 36th Fighter Group, made a powerful strike at Bures, the Thunderbolts razing most of the village to the ground. At 5.20 p.m., the chief-of-staff of the 11. Panzer-Division reported 'outrageously-strong' air activity and made known that all the panzers of the leading Kampfgruppe had been lost: eleven to the 'Jabos', two to mines, and one trapped in a marsh (*see page 50*).

During the night, the Germans renewed their effort and succeeded in driving the Americans back over the crest of Hill 318 and on to the far slope where they were hit by a well-timed German artillery barrage. The far more powerful American artillery returned fire, four battalions of artillery laying down a preparatory barrage on the

On September 28, P-47s of the 23rd Fighter Squadron, 36th Fighter Group, made a powerful strike on Bures, razing parts of the village to the ground. (ECPA)



Germans on top of the hill, and, just after midnight, the 51st Armored Infantry battalion retook the crest. The German artillery-

men retaliated and hammered CCB's positions for nearly an hour, causing many casualties.



The Bures pictures were taken by two different photographers — hence the accreditation of the various photographs to two different archives: ECPArmées in Paris (which holds German



material captured by the French Army) and the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. Both have one roll of negatives of which a small selection of frames are included here. (ECPA)



It is interesting to note that the first three American soldiers to die during the First World War were killed near Bathelémont in 1917. In the 1920s, a monument was erected there to their

memory but the Germans destroyed it in 1940. This picture of the ruined monument was taken by the Americans in October 1944 after the village had been recaptured. (NA)

SEPTEMBER 29

In the early morning, under the cover of thick fog, Gruppe Schneider, a mixed outfit of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 110 and Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 11 under Hauptmann Hans Schneider, the commander of II. Abteilung of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 110, pressed forward and captured Hill 293 and Hill 320 at the eastern edge of the Bois du Bénamont. The exhausted German troops then tried to reach Arracourt, but they did not make any headway.

Meanwhile, a platoon of Shermans of the 8th Tank Battalion moved up Hill 318 under the cover of the fog. When it lifted, the tankers called up the fighter-bombers which attacked the German troops that had assembled in the valley between Hill 318 and Hill 293. At 3.30 p.m., the 11. Panzer-Division

reported that Hill 320 had been lost again and that all contact were cut with Gruppe Schneider. In effect, the German force was now trapped in the Bois du Bénamont.

Throughout the afternoon, Thunderbolts hunted down the tanks and half-tracks around Bures, and the 405th Fighter Group claimed 11 tanks destroyed. In addition, one of its squadrons, the 511th Fighter Squadron, claimed to have flushed six tanks into the open where they had been destroyed by artillery. Actually, only 14 panzers were lost during this particular day.

With the Jabos always above them, the weary grenadiers began to stream back. At about 5.20 p.m., a line was reported re-established west of Bures, mainly by elements of Panzerbrigade 113; behind, a few panzers had formed a straggler line near Parroy. In

the Bois du Bénamont, Gruppe Schneider held its ground bravely throughout the afternoon though they were hammered all the while by artillery. When night fell, the survivors filtered through the American outposts and reached their own lines. Among them was Hauptmann Schneider who was soon to be awarded the Deutsche Kreuz in Gold for the deeds of his men on Hill 320.

While the failure of the 5. Panzerarmee was consummated in the afternoon, Balck had gone to meet von Rundstedt at OB West headquarters at Bad Kreuznach. He explained that to fulfil his mission and recover the Moselle defence line, he would need much larger reinforcements: at least three additional divisions, four battalions of artillery, four battalions of engineers, about 50 panzers, 20 to 30 sturmgeschütz and 50



After the war, the monument was rebuilt, although not on the original spot (left), but in front of the local cemetery (right). The inscription reads: 'Here in Lorraine repose the first three



Americans killed to the enemy on November 3, 1917. Corporal J. B. Gresham (of Evansville), Private T. F. Enright (of Pittsburgh) and Private M. D. Hay (of Glidden)'.



anti-tank guns with prime movers. However, by now Hitler had decided to commit what few reserves were available to the threatened 15. Armee in the north and, consequently, von Rundstedt had nothing left to give to Heeresgruppe G. Though he was probably uneasy about giving up an operation which greatly interested Hitler, Balck had no other choice than to order the 5. Panzerarmee to go over to the defensive.

In an attempt to carry out Hitler's instructions to counter-attack against the flank of Third Army, the Wehrmacht's vital panzer reserves had been thrown away. Of the 350 Panthers and PzKpfw IVs which had been sent to Lorraine since the start of September, nearly half had been lost and many of the remainder were in workshops. At the end of the month, von Rundstedt could not muster more than 500 tanks and assault guns on the entire Western Front. At little cost to themselves, the Americans had gained a resounding victory in Lorraine.

Ready to move out. American armour of the 749th Tank Battalion, attached to the 79th Infantry Division, lining the streets of Lunéville on September 27. By then, the fate of the Lorraine battle had been sealed; now Hitler was more interested in planning a new assault on the Western Allies, a massive offensive to be launched through the Ardennes, scene of his victorious breakthrough in May 1940, to regain the initiative. Its misleading code-name: 'Wacht am Rhein' (see *After the Battle* No. 4).

On September 22, faced with the fact that 'the possession of an additional major deep-water port on our north flank is an indispensable prerequisite for the final drive deep into Germany', SHAEF had accorded priority to the opening of Antwerp. Bradley informed Patton that only one of the armies in the 12th Army Group, the First Army, could be supported in further major operations and that therefore the Third Army would have to assume a defensive rôle. The 4th Armored Division remained in its positions north and east of Arracourt and the whole sector settled down. On October 12, the division was relieved by the 26th Infantry Division and went into corps reserve.

On the German side, the preparations for the major 'Wacht am Rhein' counter-offensive in Belgium had started and Heeresgruppe G had to give up its best troops, receiving in return poorly-trained units. The still potent 3. and 15. Panzergrenadier-Divisions were withdrawn into the strategic reserve being assembled by OKW, and three proven headquarters' staffs — those of the 5. Panzerarmee, the XXXXVII. Panzerkorps and LVIII. Panzerkorps — were disengaged and sent north to Heeresgruppe B. One army corps, the LXXXIX. Armeekorps, was then brought in on October 17 to take command of the sector previously under 5. Panzerarmee.





The Parroy lake is an artificial reservoir, the purpose of which is to control the water level of the Marne-Rhine Canal. By 1944, the canal had been bombed and repeatedly sabotaged by the resistance and, with the Germans unable to cope with repair of the breaches, the lake had emptied, and only a small stream of water was left trickling across its bottom.

Withdrawing from Bures in the evening of September 28, with American fighter-bombers threatening overhead, a Panther moving eastward suddenly found itself ploughing across what was the bottom of the empty lake. Although the tank started to push up a wall of mud in front of it, nevertheless it kept on moving and managed to force its way across until it reached the stream. However, as it started to climb the opposite slope, the pile of mud in front of its tracks became ever larger and, although the driver increased to maximum revs, the Panther finally ground to a halt. The crew tried desperately to extricate their mount from the glutinous mud but, with Thunderbolts overhead and no heavy recovery vehicles to hand, they had no option but to abandon their tank and withdraw on foot to Parroy. The stranded Panther suffered several air attacks over the following days but survived unscathed.

The fighting soon moved further east and, while some enterprising locals ventured through the sticky bottom of the lake to recover loose equipment and tools, the tank remained firmly bogged down until the end of the war. The main gun and the turret were removed some time later by a scrap merchant but, when shortly afterwards the canal was repaired and put back into service, the water in the Parroy lake soon rose to its normal level, so submerging the hull, seemingly for ever.

During the latter part of 1944, an 18-year-old trooper of the French 2ème Division Blindée, Michel Aubry, was visibly impressed by the sight of the many grave-

PANTHER AT PARROY

By Jean Paul Pallud

yards of armoured vehicles he saw scattered all over northern France. Twenty years later that same trooper, now a Capitaine, was appointed to the Inspectorate of the Armour and Cavalry and, in 1965, Capitaine Aubry obtained a letter of intent from the then-Defence Minister to set up a documentation centre for armoured fighting vehicles at Saumur on the Loire river between Angers and Tour.

Three years later, Commandant Aubry was posted to create a new 3ème Régiment de Cuirassiers at Chenevières, about 15 kilometres south-east of Lunéville. There, in front of the Forêt de Mondon, he found himself once again in the same area where he had fought in 1944 with the 2ème Division

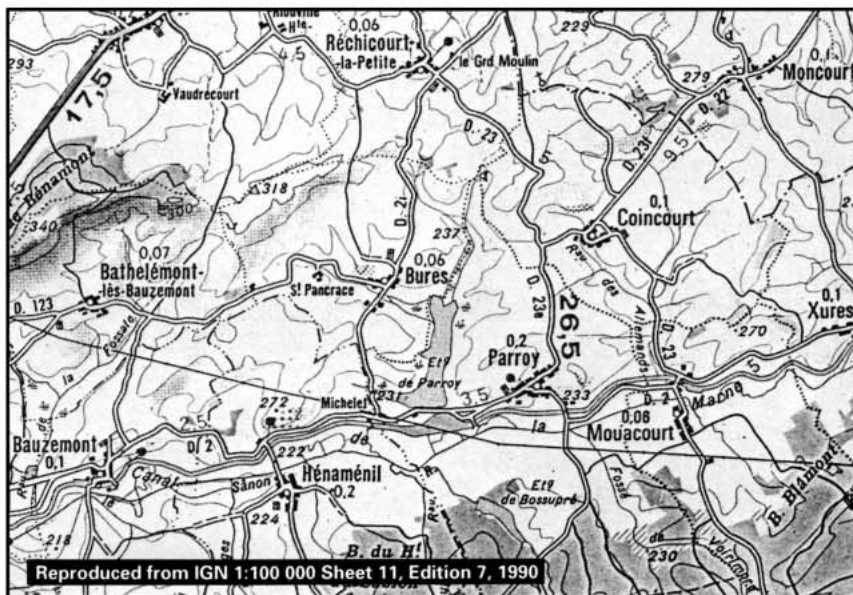


Top: Panthers at Bures, the village on the north-western edge of the man-made lake at Parroy. On September 27, 1944, a German armoured attack reached la Fourasse, a farm near a small cross-roads just west of Bures, before it was halted by US artillery. **(BA)** Above: The picture was taken on the western edge of the village so it may well show two of the Panther Ausf. Gs withdrawing while being covered by a third.

The artificial lake lies on the direct route east between Bures and Parroy, its purpose being to supply water when necessary to replenish the Marne-Rhine Canal just to the south.

Blindée and he had many opportunities to tour the battlefields. It was here that he first heard a rumour about a tank that was supposed to be lying on the bottom of the Parroy lake. However, the reports conflicted, some locals saying that the tank was still there and that they had seen it, others believing that it had already been removed a long time ago. In a way, the tale of Parroy lake was a little like the legend of Loch Ness.

In 1971, Commandant Aubry was appointed director of the Centre de Documentation sur les Engins Blindés — the Armoured Fighting Vehicles Documentation Centre — at Saumur. At first, the centre existed in name only but his small team, known as 'Aubry's Gang', soon began to tour France searching for surviving vehicles and armour. However, although he still vividly recalled the sights of 20 years before, by now most of the wartime graveyards had gone and the majority of the exhibits had to be obtained



Left: This trooper carrying a Panzerschreck is walking past the southern embankment of the lake where it borders the D2. **Right:** The steps enabled Jean Paul to pinpoint the exact spot.



from other sources. Military camps, test centres and firing ranges were all checked out and the Saumur collection grew at an incredible rate: from ten items in 1970, to 100 in 1973, and up to 150 by 1975!

Colonel Aubry had not forgotten about the mysterious tank reputed to be lying on the bottom of the Parroy lake and in the spring of 1976 he flew over the lake in a helicopter to try to locate it. When he failed to spot anything, he made arrangements for a team of frogmen to carry out an underwater search. The divers felt their way across the bottom and finally found the tank about 80 metres from the eastern bank. Buoys were quickly tied to mark out the spot, Colonel Aubry being elated to find that the Parroy monster was indeed a reality. Its identity was however still uncertain and, while it was thought to be a Panther, visibility under water was so poor that the frogmen had been unable to confirm the type.



Divers searching the lake in 1976 following up the rumours that a tank lay submerged on the bottom.

Colonel Aubry and the Saumur team worked up a plan for the recovery of the tank with September 8, 1976 being chosen as 'D-Day'. The 3ème Régiment de Cuirassiers, which was still garrisoned at Chenevières near Lunéville, provided two AMX 30D heavy wreckers, and the 408ème B.C.S. (Bataillon de Commandement et de Soutien) based at Sarrebourg made available a 40-ton tank transporter. Another tank regiment, the 4ème Régiment de Cuirassiers at Bitche, lent a team of divers for the first phase of the operation.

This preliminary phase of the operation was conducted on the afternoon of September 7. The two AMX 30D wreckers took up position on the bank as the heavy cables were taken into the water and down to the muddy bottom. The divers fixed these to the tank and an attempt was made to pull it from its grave by brute force. Surprisingly, the manoeuvre proved far easier than had been anticipated and the tank moved. Everything was therefore made ready for the operation the following day.

Present with Colonel Aubry, Pierre Buhler and other members of the Saumur staff, were Colonel Charbonnier, CO of the 3ème Régiment de Cuirassiers, Colonel Frécaut, CO of the 408ème B.C.S., and the mayors of Parroy and Bures. A crowd of some 1,500 had gathered to watch the proceedings, and to keep the onlookers abreast of developments, a loudspeaker has been set up on a Jeep and a commentator described the technical details of what was going on.

The operation started at about 9 a.m. when the two wreckers slowly began to winch the tank towards the bank. Its move could be followed by the bubbles of air which emerged on the surface of the water as the tank stirred up the slime. The climax came at about half past ten when the heavy tank reached the bank which was quite steep at this point. As it emerged from the water, the mysterious AFV was immediately identified as a Panther, the Saumur specialists soon labelling it as a Model G. From time to time, the pull was stopped to let the water run out from its rear, the engine hatches having been opened for this purpose.

By 12.30 p.m., the Panther was completely out of the water and sitting on the bank. A toast was drunk to the success of the operation and a team began cleaning the tank with high pressure water jets provided by a fire-fighting truck of the 3ème Régiment de Cuirassiers. The inside was washed out too, the ammunition racks being checked. An old demolition charge was deactivated and removed.

After lunch, the two wreckers lifted the front of the Panther so that it could be winched onto a transporter. The operation had ended in complete success and, indeed, several of the local children of 1944, now some fifty years old, returned the various items they had liberated from the stranded Panther at the end of the war.



Although the turret was missing, having been removed by a long-forgotten scrap-man before the lake was re-flooded at the end of the war, experts from Saumur soon identified the hull as a Model G Panther. Its recovery proved to be remarkably easy with a straight pull from the bank.





The Panther was then moved by road to the barracks of the 3^{ème} Régiment de Cuirassiers at Chenevières where it remained on display for about two months before it was moved by rail to Saumur in December.

From the moment the Panther came into contact with the outside air, it had started to rust. It was therefore entirely dismantled, all parts being cleaned and closely examined. Even though it had spent more than thirty years under water, all the electrical equipment was in perfect shape although it turned out that the dynamo was burnt out. Thus, for its last days of battle in 1944, the Panther had probably been unable to charge its batteries and these might well have been hopelessly low when it ventured across the lake.

Using the two AMX 30D recovery vehicles, the Panther was lifted and winched aboard the transporter. (All recovery pictures courtesy Saumur museum.)

All the equipment was restored to working order, the dynamo coil being replaced and the batteries refilled with new acid. However, when VARTA were informed of the performance of their 1944 production, they were so pleased that they exchanged the old batteries for a new modern set. The Panther was then rebuilt as new, using pieces cannibalised from many other wrecks, including a new turret.

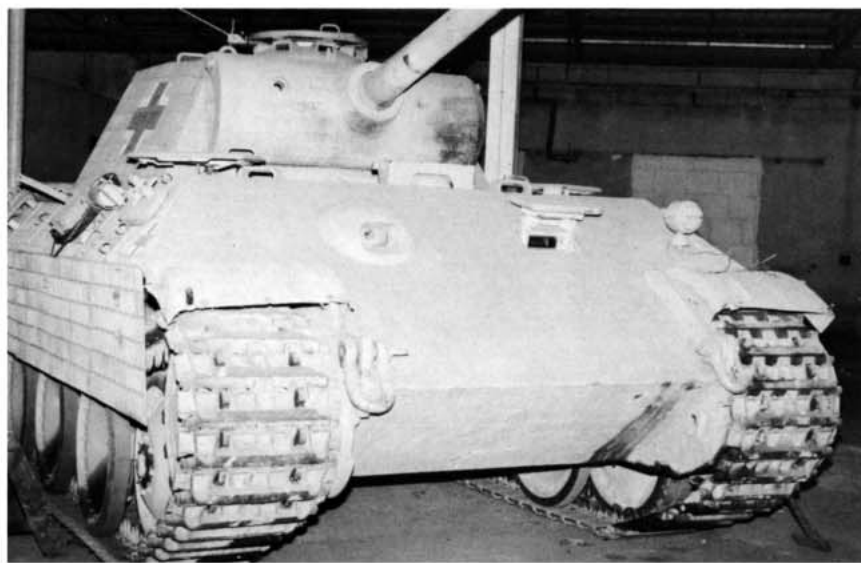
The CDEB team make considerable efforts to restore their vehicles and today the Saumur Museum is the undisputed holder of a world record: that of the largest number of historical military vehicles in working order.

More than 100 tanks, including a Tiger II and a Panther, and several dozen vehicles, armoured and softskin, are kept running and regularly displayed (see *Wheels and Tracks* No. 3). The Saumur collection reached a total of 300 armoured vehicles in 1980 and by 1990 had increased to some 700-odd items. Even now, there are plans to add a further 100 exhibits. Meanwhile, the stock of spare parts now totals over 5,000 tonnes.

The museum is open every day of the year, without exception, from 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Enquiries can be made by telephoning (from Britain) 01033 41 67 20 96.



Left: The gearbox and differential had to be cut from the chassis, replacement parts coming from the carcasses of 14 other tanks. The 'new' turret came from the 'Golan' — the old



museum scrapyard. Right: The restored Panther took part in the film *La Neige et le Feu* in 1991–92. (Pictures kindly supplied by Georges Mazy of the Brussels Tank Museum.)

